







THE  
PRACTICAL WORKS  
OF  
✓  
THE REV. RICHARD BAXTER:

WITH  
A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,  
AND  
*A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF HIS WRITINGS,*

BY THE  
REV. WILLIAM ORME,

AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE OF JOHN OWEN, D.D.;" "BIBLIOTHECA BIBLICA," ETC.

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VOL. VII.  
IN TWENTY-THREE VOLUMES.

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THE  
COURT  
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A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR

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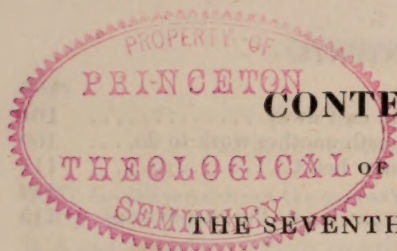
VOL. VII.

IN TWENTY-THREE VOLUMES

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THE SEVENTH VOLUME.

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## NOW OR NEVER.

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A  
**TREATISE**  
OF  
**CONVERSION,**

PREACHED AND NOW PUBLISHED FOR THE USE OF THOSE THAT  
ARE STRANGERS TO A TRUE CONVERSION, ESPECIALLY  
THE GROSSLY IGNORANT AND UNGODLY.

---

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature : old things are passed away ; behold  
all things are become new.

2 COR. v. 17.



TO THE INHABITANTS  
OF THE  
BOROUGH AND FOREIGN  
OF  
KIDDERMINSTER.

---

Dearly beloved Friends in the Lord,

As it was the unfeigned love of your souls, that hath hitherto moved me much to print what I have done, that you might have the help of those truths, which God hath acquainted me with, when I am dead and gone, so is it the same affection that hath persuaded me here to send you this familiar discourse. It is the same that you heard preached: and the reasons that moved me to preach it, do move me now, to publish it; that if any of you have forgot it, it may be brought to your remembrance; or if it worked not upon you in the hearing, yet in the deliberate perusal it may work. I bless the Lord that there are so many among you that know by experience the nature of conversion, which is the cause of my abundant affection towards you, above any other people that I know, (especially in that you also walk in so much humility, unity, and peace, when pride and divisions have caused so many ruins abroad). But I see that there is no place or people on earth that will answer our desires, or free us from those troubles that constantly attend our earthly state. I have exceeding cause to rejoice in very many of you; but in many also I have cause of sorrow. Long have I travailed (as Paul speaks, Gal. iv. 19.) as in



birth, till Christ be formed in you. For this have I studied and prayed, and preached; for this have I dealt with you in private exhortation; for this have I sent you all such books as I conceived suitable to your needs: and yet to the grief of my soul I must speak it, the lives of many of you declare that this great work is yet undone. I believe God, and therefore I know that you must every soul of you be converted, or condemned to everlasting punishment. And knowing this, I have told it you over and over again: I have shewed you the proof and reasons of it, and the certain misery of an unconverted state: I have earnestly besought you, and begged of you to return; and if I had tears at command, I should have mixed all these exhortations with my tears; and if I had but time and strength, (as I have not,) I should have made bold to have come more to you, and sit with you in your houses, and entreated you on the behalf of your souls, even twenty times, for once that I have entreated you. The God that sent me to you knows that my soul is grieved for your blindness, and stubbornness, and wickedness, and misery, more than for all the losses or crosses in the world, and that my heart's desire and prayer for you to God, is, that you may yet be converted and saved. But alas! I see not the answer of my desires, some few of you (and I thank God they be but few) will not so much as come to me, nor be willing that I should come to you to be catechised or instructed. Some of you still quarrel with the holy way in which you must walk if ever you will be saved. Some of you give up yourselves to the world, and thrust God out of your hearts and houses, and have not so much as a chapter read, or an earnest prayer put up to God nor once a savoury word of heaven, from morning to night. I would there were none of you that secretly hate the diligent strictness that God hath commanded us, and think this daily care for our salvation to be more ado than needs; as if you had found out something else, that better deserved your care and diligence, and would better pay you for it. Too many among you are carping and cavilling against those humble, godly Christians whom you should carefully imitate; you are hearkening after and aggravating all their infirmities, and charging them as hypocrites, because they will not be as careless as yourselves: but you consider not

that in so doing, you censure yourselves, and speak the greatest terror to your souls, that you can imagine; for if they that go so far be hypocrites, what will become of you that come not near them? If they that set their minds on the life to come, and think nothing too much that they can do to be saved, be yet but hypocrites; if they that dare not swear, or curse, or drink, or whore, or deceive, or wilfully live in any sin, are yet but hypocrites; what then shall become of such as you, that so much neglect a holy life, and live so much to the world and flesh, and never did a quarter so much as they for the saving of your souls? If the righteous themselves are scarcely saved, (that is, with much striving and suffering, and with much ado,) and if hypocrites cannot be saved at all; where then shall the ungodly and the sinners appear<sup>a</sup>? Your Judge hath told you that “except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven<sup>b</sup>.” If these men then be no better than pharisees, you must exceed them, or there is no possibility of your salvation. Go beyond them first, and then you may the better condemn them. Till then, you doubly condemn yourselves that come so short of them. If malice did not blind you, you would have seen that this stone which you cast at others, would fly back in your faces.

But above all, it is the odious, swinish sin of tippling and drunkenness, and such like sensuality, that declareth too many of you to be yet strangers to conversion. I have told you the danger of it: I have shewed you the word of God against it, resolving that drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God<sup>c</sup>, and commanding us not to keep company with you, or to eat with you<sup>d</sup>. I have told you, and told you an hundred times, with what a face these sins will look upon you in the end. And yet all will not do, for aught yet I see, as I found you I must leave you; and after all my pains and prayers, instead of rejoicing in the hopes of your salvation, I must part with you in sorrow, and appear against you before the Lord, as a witness of your wilfulness, and negligence, and impenitency. Ah Lord! is there no remedy, but I must leave so many of my poor neighbours

<sup>a</sup> 1 Pet. iv. 17, 18. Matt. xxiii. 33.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. v. 20.

<sup>c</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

<sup>d</sup> 1 Cor. v. 11—13.

in the power of satan, and in a slavery to their flesh, and a contempt of heaven, and a wilful neglect of a holy life? Is there no persuading them to cast away their known and wilful sin; and to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness? Must I see them condemned by Christ that would have saved them? Must my preaching and persuasions be brought in against them, that were intended by me for their conversion and salvation? O, what is the matter, that we cannot prevail with reasonable men in so plain a case? Can they imagine that sin is better than holiness; or that it is better to obey their flesh than God? Do they think that this life will last always? Or that the pleasures of sin will never have an end? Or that they shall never be called to a reckoning for all this? Can they imagine that heaven is not worthy to be sought, and eternal things to be preferred before those that are transitory? Or that a careless, loose, and fleshly life will be better at last than a life of diligence, obedience, and holiness? O that we did but know what to say to these men that would go to their hearts, and bring them to their wits, or what to do for them that might turn them from their sin, and fetch them home to God, and save them. Is there no hope to prevail with them before they find themselves in hell? Poor miserable souls! O that I knew but what to do for you, that might do you good, and save you before it be too late. But alas! what should we do more? If my life lay on it, I cannot persuade a drunkard from his filthy drunkenness, nor a covetous man from his worldly mind and life, how much less to a thorough conversion, and a heavenly conversation? The example of their godly neighbours at the next doors will not allure them, but they will go on towards hell with the voice of prayers and exhortations in their ears! The reproofs of their neighbours do but anger them, and they cry out, that all is said in malice: as if it were a malicious thing to go about to save them from sin and hell. Ministers cannot prevail with them in public nor in private. Many of them will speak me fair; but they will not be persuaded to turn and live a holy life. And if neither neighbours, nor friends, nor ministers can be heard; if conscience itself cannot be heard; if the God that made them, if Christ that bought them cannot be heard; if the plain-



est Scripture cannot be regarded ; if mercies and afflictions, if heaven and hell cannot prevail to draw a sinner to be willing to be saved, and for so reasonable a matter, as to let go his filthy vice and vanity, and to be ruled by his Maker rather than by his flesh ; then what remedy, and who shall pity them that sees them in damnation ?

Neighbours, my request to you is now but this much ; and as your friend, as your teacher, I beseech you deny me not so small a matter : even that you will be but at so much labour, as to read over this book to yourselves, and with your families ; and that you will consider of it as you go, between God and your own hearts, whether it be not a matter that concerneth you to the quick : and that you will daily beg of God upon your knees to give you this necessary mercy of conversion. Away with your known sins, and with the unnecessary company and occasions that would draw you to them. You were baptized into the name of the Holy Ghost as your Sanctifier : and will you hate sanctification, or refuse it, or neglect it ? You say, you believe the communion of saints, and will you abhor their communion, and choose the company of ignorant, ungodly men ? Well ! if after all this you be still the same, and any of you shall appear before the Lord in an unconverted state, this book, besides the rest of my labours, shall witness to your faces, that you were told of the danger, and told of the necessity of a thorough conversion. And you that now are always telling us, that all are sinners, and quiet yourselves with this, that all men have their faults, shall then be convinced to your everlasting confusion, that there is so great a difference between sinners and sinners, the converted sinners and the unconverted, that the former shall enter into the joy of their Lord, when you with the rest must be cast into perdition, Matt. xxv. 13. That you were forewarned of this, is here witnessed against you, under the hand of,

Your faithful monitor,

RICHARD BAXTER.

TO

## THE READER.

---

AN ACCOUNT OF THIS SLENDER WORK.

You have here presented to you a common subject, handled in a mean and vulgar style, not only without those subtleties and citations, which might suit it to the palates of learned men, but also without that conciseness, sententiousness and quickness, which might make it acceptable to the ingenious and acute. If you wonder why I should trouble the world with such an ordinary, dull discourse, as I owe you an account of it, so I shall faithfully give it you. Besides my defect of leisure and acuteness to satisfy the expectations of these sharper wits, I did here purposely avoid that little which I could have done. I was to preach not only to a popular auditory, but to the most ignorant, sottish part of that auditory; for it is they that are principally concerned in the matter. And knowing that the whole nation abounds with such, I was easily persuaded to permit the press to offer it to their view, and that, as it was preached without alteration. For the subject, I know it is the most needful that can be offered them. The reason why they must be condemned is, because they are not converted; and were they but truly converted they would escape. To convert a sinner from the error of his way, is to save a soul from death, and to cover a multitude of sins<sup>e</sup>: to convert them, is to pull them out of the fire<sup>f</sup>: it is to recover them out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will<sup>g</sup>. Conversion is the most blessed work, and the day of conversion the most blessed day that this world is acquainted with. It takes a slave from satan, and a hand from his ser-

<sup>e</sup> James v. 19, 20.

<sup>f</sup> Jude 23.

<sup>g</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26.

vice ; it addeth a subject, a son, a member to the Lord Jesus : it rescueth a soul from everlasting torments, and maketh him an heir of everlasting joys. And for such a work, we can never do too much. And alas, the most are little sensible of the nature, or necessity of this change. Many that say, they believe in God as their Creator, and in Christ as their Redeemer, do declare that they are deluded by their deceitful hearts, in that they believe not in the Holy Ghost as their Sanctifier : for they know not what sanctification is, nor ever much looked after it in themselves. The commonness and the greatness of men's necessity, commanded me to do any thing that I could for their relief, and to bring forth some water to cast upon this fire, though I had not at hand a silver vessel to carry it in, nor thought it the most fit. The plainest words are the most profitable oratory in the weightiest matters. Fineness is for ornament, and delicacy for delight ; but they answer not necessity, though sometimes they may modestly attend that which answers it. Yea, when they are conjunct, it is hard for the necessitous hearer or reader to observe the matter of ornament and delicacy, and not to be carried from the matter of necessity ; and to hear or read a neat, concise, sententious discourse, and not to be hurt by it ; for it usually hindereth the due operation of the matter, and keeps it from the heart, and stops it in the fancy, and makes it seem as light as the style. We use not to stand upon compliment or precedency, when we run to quench a common fire, nor to call men out to it by an eloquent speech. If we see a man fall into fire or water, we stand not upon mannerliness in plucking him out, but lay hands on him as we can without delay. I shall never forget the relish of my soul, when God first warmed my heart with these matters, and when I was newly entered into a seriousness in religion : when I read such a book as Bishop Andrew's Sermons, or heard such kind of preaching, I felt no life in it : methought they did but play with holy things. Yea, when I read such as Bishop Hall, or Henshaw's Meditations, or other such Essays, Resolves and witty things, I tasted little-sweetness in them ; though now I can find much. But it was the plain and pressing downright preacher, that only seemed to me to be in good sadness, and to make somewhat of it, and to



speaking with life, and light, and weight : and it was such kind of writings, that were wonderfully pleasant and savoury to my soul. And I am apt to think that it is thus now with my hearers ; and that I should measure them by what I was, and not by what I am. And yet I must confess, that though I can better digest exactness and brevity, than I could so long ago, yet I as much value seriousness and plainness ; and I feel in myself in reading or hearing, a despising of that wittiness as proud foolery, which savoureth of levity, and tendeth to evaporate weighty truths, and turn them all into very fancies, and keep them from the heart. As a stage-player, or morris-dancer differs from a soldier or a king, so do these preachers from the true and faithful ministers of Christ : and as they deal liker to players than preachers in the pulpit, so usually their hearers do rather come to play with a sermon, than to attend a message from the God of heaven about the life or death of their souls.

Indeed, the more I have to do with the ignorant sort of people, the more I find that we cannot possibly speak too plainly to them. If we do not speak in their own vulgar dialect, they understand us not. Nay, if we do so, yet if we compose those very words into a handsomeness of sentence, or if we speak any thing briefly, they feel not what we say : nay, I find, if we do not purposely draw out the matter into such a length of words, and use some repetition of it, that they may hear it inculcated on them again, we do but overrun their understandings, and they presently lose us : that very style and way, that is apt to be a little offensive to the exact, and that is tedious and loathsome to the curious ear, whose religion is most in air and fancy, must be it that must do good upon the ignorant, and is usually most savoury and acceptable to them. Upon such considerations, I purposely chose so coarse a style in the handling of this subject : for I preached and wrote it, not for the judicious, but for the special use of the most senseless, ignorant sort. And indeed, I am very sensible that herein I have not reached the thing that I desired ; and yet have not spoke half so plainly as I should : especially, that there wanteth that life and piercing quickness, which may concur with plainness, and a subject of such necessity doth require. The true causes of this were, the dulness and badness of my

own heart, and a continual decay of the quickness of my spirits, through the increase of pituitous scotomatical distempers, together with that exceeding scarcity of leisure, which weakness and oppressing business have caused. But if God will give help and leisure, I shall seek a little to amend it, in something more which on the same subject I have begun.

One other reason that moved me to consent to this publication, is the scarcity of books that are wrote purposely on this subject: though, on the by and by parts, I know that nothing is more common in English, yet on this subject purposely and alone I remember scarce any besides Mr. Whateley's "New Birth," (and some Sermons of Repentance): and indeed I have long persuaded all that I had opportunity to persuade, to buy that book of Mr. Whateley's, and to give them abroad among the ignorant, ungodly people. And if I had seen any such fruit of my persuasions as I desired, I think I should never have published this. But when I could not prevail with the one sort to buy them, nor with the other sort to give them, I resolved to print somewhat on so necessary a point, were it never so meanly done, if it were but that I might have some books to give myself to some that need, and also that the newness and other advantages might entice this book into the hands of some, that are never like to read those, which heretofore I have commended to them.

One thing more I observe is like to be offensive in this writing, and that is, that the same things do here and there fall in, which formerly have been spoken. I confess my memory oft lets slip the passages that I have before written, and in that forgetfulness I write them again: but I make no great matter of it. The writing of the same things is safe to the reader, and why then should it be grievous to me<sup>h</sup>? not because it is displeasing to the curious, till I set more by their applause, and take the approbation of men for my reward. I like to hear a man dwell much on the same essentials of Christianity. For we have but one God, and one Christ, and one faith to preach; and I will not preach another Gospel to please men with variety, as if our Saviour and our Gospel were grown stale. This speaking the same

<sup>h</sup> Phil. iii. 1.

things is a sign that a man hath considered what he speaks and that he hath made it his own, and utters not that which accidentally falls in. And it is a sign that he is still of the same belief, and doth not change, and that he loves the truth, which he so much dwells upon; and that he looketh more at the feeding of men's souls, and strengthening their graces, than at the feeding of their itching fancies, and multiplying their opinions. For it is the essentials and common truths (as I have often said) that we daily live upon as our bread and drink. And we have incomparably more work before us, to know these better, and use them better, than to know more. The sea will afford us more water after we have taken out a thousand tuns, than a hundred of those wells and pits from whence we never yet fetched any. I speak not against the need of clothing the same truths with a grateful variety in representing it to the world, nor against a necessary compliance with the diseases of some itching novelists in order to the cure; but only give you an account of this publication, by him that had rather be charged with the greatest rudeness of style, than with the guilt of neglecting what he might have done for the saving of one soul.

RICHARD BAXTER.





## TREATISE OF CONVERSION.

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MATTHEW XVIII. 3.

*Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

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BELOVED HEARERS,

THOUGH the Gospel doth not presuppose grace in men, but bringeth it to them, yet doth it suppose them to be men, and therefore endued with natural principles. And though there is not enough in nature to convert men, yet doth grace find some advantage in nature for its reception, and somewhat which it may improve for a further good: otherwise we might as well plead with beasts as men. Supernatural light supposeth natural; the doctrine of faith supposeth reason; and he that would draw you to be everlastingly happy, doth suppose you so much to love yourselves as to be willing to be happy, and loath to be absolutely miserable. I come not therefore to persuade any of you to these things, which are supposed: we are not sent to entreat men to be men, or reasonable creatures, or to love themselves, or to be willing to be happy; I will not be beholden to any of you for this, for you cannot do otherwise: but we are sent to tell you where your happiness lieth, and where not, and to advise you to exercise your reason aright, and to know the way to happiness, and take that course by which it may obtained.



I must confess to you that ever since I knew what it was to be a minister of the Gospel, what labour it must cost, and how cold a reward is to be expected from our hearers, and what a troublous errand we come upon, in the judgment of the most, I never could think any thing below the pleasing of God, and the saving of the souls of our people and ourselves, to be a motive sufficient to draw a man to this employment. Nor do I think it meet to come once into the pulpit, with any lower ultimate ends than these. He that is a minister for lower ends than these, in heart and deed is no minister of Christ; but as he seeks himself, so will he serve himself, and must reward himself as he can; and no wonder if he be unfaithful in all his course. And he that preacheth one sermon for lower ultimate ends than these, will seek himself, and not Christ, and so be unfaithful in that sermon: and if such study smooth words and fine sentences, which tend more to please, than to save men's souls, it is no wonder. Considering these things, when I had purposed this day's work in this place, I remembered in whose name I must speak, and on whose errand I must go, and therefore that from him I must receive my message: and I remembered also to whom I was to speak, even to men that must be everlastingly happy or miserable, and that are now in the way, and have that to do in a little time, which this their everlasting state doth depend upon: I remembered also, that Christ hath assured me that of the many that are called, few are chosen; and that most men perish, for all the mercy that is in God, and for all that Christ hath done and suffered, and for all the grace that is offered them in the Gospel; and I considered the reason, even because they will not receive this grace, nor entertain Christ and the mercy of God, as it is offered to them. I therefore resolved to preach to you, as one that hath but one sermon to preach to you, and knows not whether he shall ever speak to you more, and therefore to choose no lower subject than that which your life or death depends upon, and to handle it as far as I am able accordingly, with that plainness as a matter of such concernment should be handled with. If my business hither were to be thought a learned man, or to procure your applause, or to please your ears, I should then have prepared some pleasing matter, and tried to have adorned it

with some flourishes of wit, and presented it to you in a mixture of languages, which you do not understand, and with such pretty jingles and gaudy allusions as carnal fancies are used to be tickled with; but knowing that this is not the way to please God, but to please the devil, nor to save myself, or those that hear me, but to hinder the salvation of me and you, I soon resolved not only to avoid the study of such unprofitable, carnal ostentation, but even to study to avoid it: for I should be loath to please satan any way by the doing his work, but doubly loath to please him in preaching the Gospel, and to be serving him in the choicest service of my Lord.

Will the Lord but bless the word that I shall speak to the conversion of any souls here present, I have the ends I come for; and shall believe that I have cause to bless his name that sent me hither to day; and in hope of this success, which I have begged of the Lord, I shall cheerfully address myself to the work.

The occasion of these words of Christ, was the carnal thoughts of his disciples concerning the state of his kingdom, as if it had been of earthly pomp and glory, like the great monarchs of the world; and also their carnal, aspiring desires and contrivances to get the highest place in his kingdom. They found these conceits among the Jews, and nature easily entertained and cherished them, which is so dark and so disaffected to higher things. Christ thought it not yet seasonable to give them the full discovery of his kingdom, it being reserved for the Holy Ghost, who was miraculously to possess them, and teach them all things in Christ's bodily absence, that the world might see that his doctrine was not of his devising, but from above: but yet he presently falls upon that sin which these inquiries did discover in them; and before he fully telleth them the nature of his kingdom, he plainly telleth them what they must be if they will have a part in that kingdom. It may seem a great doubt, whether the disciples were at this time unconverted, that Christ telleth them of the necessity of a conversion, or whether it be but a particular conversion from some particular sins that he here speaks of; as there is a general conversion or repentance necessary to the unrege-

nerate, and a particular conversion or repentance necessary to the godly upon their particular falls. To this I answer, 1. Judas was undoubtedly unconverted, and so did continue. 2. The apostles were then ignorant of many truths which afterwards became of absolute necessity to salvation; as Christ's death, resurrection, ascension, the nature of his kingdom, &c. Yet I dare not say, that they were not in a state of salvation when they were thus ignorant of them, because they were not then fundamentals, or of absolute necessity, as afterwards they were: but yet Christ might well tell them that these truths must be believed hereafter, and they could not have that eminent measure of faith which was proper to his more illuminated church after his ascension, without believing of them. Yea, if they had not believed them when they were made fundamentals of absolute necessity to be believed, they had ceased to be true disciples of Christ. And whether there be not some noble effects of this Gospel-doctrine upon the heart, which are also proper to the church after Christ's ascension, as well as these articles of belief were proper to them, and so that this text may speak of both, I leave to further consideration. 3. Many think that it is but a particular conversion and repentance that is here spoken of; that is, from this sin of ambition which the disciples did now manifest: but then they observe not that it will hence be concluded, that a true disciple may by a particular sin be in such a state, that if he should die in it, he should not be saved. But others that are learned and godly think that no hard conclusion, as long as God will not suffer them to die in it. 4. I purposely forbear to trouble you with the names of expositors, but I make no doubt but they are in the right, that suppose that Christ doth here reprehend their ambition, by describing the contrary temper of his true followers, shewing them the absolute necessity of conversion, without any determination whether they were or were not converted at present: he telleth them that except they be converted, humble persons, they cannot be saved, but doth not determine that now they are otherwise. And indeed it seemeth not likely that the disciples of Christ had not then that conversion and humility of mind that was of absolute necessity to salvation: these words may well be used to converted men, to



shew them the necessity of that conversion which they have. As if a Christian begin to grow covetous, you may say, except you be a man converted from earthly mindedness to heavenly mindedness, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven; which doth not deny him to be already converted. Though as to our present purpose the matter is not great which of these be taken for the sense, because they all afford us that doctrine that we shall gather: for if there be no salvation without a particular conversion from a particular sin, much less without a conversion from a state of sin. But the plain sense of the text I doubt not is this; as if he should say, 'You strive for pre-eminency and worldly greatness in my kingdom; why I tell you my kingdom is a kingdom of babes; it containeth none but the humble that are small in their own eyes, and look not after great matters in this world; and though nature be proud, yet except you be (now or hereafter) converted men, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' By the kingdom of heaven is here meant, both the estate of true grace, and so of glory. Not as if conversion were a preparation to their entering into this kingdom as begun on earth, but it is their very entrance itself, and so the beginning of it. The doctrine we shall hence handle, shall be given you in no other but the words of the text, lest I seem to force them.

Doctrine. It is a most certain truth, protested by Jesus Christ, that except men be converted and become as little children, they cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The order which we shall observe in handling this, is,—

I. To shew you what this kingdom of heaven is.

II. What it is to be converted, and particularly what to become as little children.

III. Confirm the doctrine from other Scriptures.

IV. I shall give you the reasons why no man can enter into the kingdom of heaven that is not converted.

V. We shall make use of all, and therein shew you the hindrances of conversion, the marks of it, the motives to it, and the Directions for attaining it; as the Lord shall enable me.

I. The kingdom of heaven is taken in Scripture both for the state of grace and glory. As all men are by nature in

the kingdom of satan here, by a willing obeying of him, and hereafter to be tormented by him ; so all the converted are by grace in the kingdom of Christ, by a willing submission and obedience here, and hereafter to be glorified by him for ever. This is all one kingdom, because there is the same king and the same subjects ; yet they are diversified in this, that one is the way or means to the other, and that the laws and duties which belong to us in the way, are not all the same as those that shall continue at the end. It is called the kingdom of heaven, both because the king is from above, and not a mere man as earthly kings are, and reigneth in heaven invisibly, and not as earthly monarchs whom you may see ; and because it is heaven which all grace and means, and duties do tend to, and it is heaven where is the end and full felicity, and the most glorious part of the kingdom. The Guide and Sanctifier of the church also is from heaven, even the Holy Ghost : the law is from heaven by the inspiration of the Spirit : the hearts of the subjects are heavenly, and their lives must be heavenly : it is here in the seed, it will be hereafter in the full tree. The difference between the egg and the bird, the acorn and the oak, is not near so great as the difference between the kingdom of grace and of glory. And yet a man that had never seen or known the production of such creatures would little believe, if you should shew him an acorn, that that would come to be an oak. And it is no marvel if a carnal heart will not believe that the weak, despised graces of the saints, do tend to such an inconceivable glory. When a poor Christian that is dead to this world lieth praying and panting after God, and looking and longing after glory, little doth the unbelieving world think, what a blessed harbour it is that by these gales he is moving and hasting to ; they now see him praying, and shall then see him possessing and praising ; they now see his labour and suffering, but they will not believe his blessedness, and perfection, till they see it to their own sorrow who have lost it.

Before I proceed to open the nature of conversion, I shall say somewhat more of the word : and I shall shew you the difference between Conversion, Repentance, Regeneration, Sanctification, Vocation.

1. The truth is, all these five words are used in Scripture to express the same work upon the soul : only they have

some respective and other smaller differences, which I shall now manifest to you. And the first word Vocation is taken often for God's act of calling when it hath no success, and this is called uneffectual calling. So it is used Prov. i. 24. "Because I called, and ye refused, I have stretched forth my hands and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof." So Isa. lxxv. 12. Jer. vii. 13. "I called, but ye answered not:" and many other places. 1. Sometimes it is taken for the act of God when it is successful; as 1 Thess. ii. 12. and many more places. 2. This success itself is termed our calling in a passive sense: and it is twofold. (1.) Common; when men are brought but to outward profession and common gifts; and so the word is used often. (2.) Special; when men are savingly converted to Christ: the former is Common effectual Calling; the latter is Special effectual Calling. And this last is the same with conversion: only these two differences are observable. 1. As to the name, it is metaphorically taken from the outward call of the Gospel, and so applied to the effect on the soul. 2. It hath usually in Scripture a principal respect to the first effect on the soul, even the act of faith itself above all other graces, and following obedience; yet not excluding the latter, but sometimes plainly comprehending them. So that some divines conceive that Vocation is a work different from Sanctification, because they conceive that it is only the Spirit's causing the first act of faith in the soul, and by that act a habit is effected, and therewith the seed of all graces, which they call the work of sanctification. And indeed the word Vocation hath special respect to the Gospel-call, to the act of believing in Christ, and the proper effect of that call, even our actual belief. But sometimes it comprehendeth the whole Christian relation and state, as Heb. iii. 1. and 2 Pet. i. 10, &c.

2. Repentance is the same thing as special effectual calling; so we take not calling in the most narrow sense of all, for the bare act of faith; only this difference there is: 1. The word Repentance doth specially denote our motion from the 'terminus à quo,' even that sinful state from which we turn, and which we repent of; yet including essentially also the state to which we turn. Whereas the word Voca-



tion doth principally express the state to which we are called. 2. Also the word Repentance doth principally respect our turning to God from whom we fell: but the word Vocation doth as much or more respect our coming to Christ the Mediator as the way to the Father. There is a twofold repentance; (1.) One is our turning from a state of sin and misery, such as the unconverted are in, and this is it that we mean now, as the same with conversion from the same state. (2.) There is also a particular repentance, which is a turning from a particular sin, and this must be daily renewed while we live. Repentance signifieth and containeth two things. The first is a hearty sorrow that ever we sinned; the second is a change of the mind from that sin to God. Indeed the former is but part of the latter: the changed mind is changed in this part, and manifesteth its change in a special manner, by remorse for former sins: though all remorse is not from such a change.

3. The word Regeneration also signifieth the same thing with Conversion, but with this small difference; 1. The term is metaphorical, taken from our natural generation; because there is so great a change, that a man is as it were another man. 2. The word is in Scripture-sense, I think more comprehensive than Conversion, Repentance or Vocation; for it signifieth not only the newness of our qualities, but also of our relations, even our whole new state. This is not ordinarily acknowledged, but if we view the places where the word is used, it will prove so: for as Paul describing the thing though he useth not the word, 2 Cor. v. 11. saith, "He that is in Christ is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new:" where relations must needs be a part of that all as the context will shew. So Tit. iii. 5. it is called "the laver or washing of regeneration;" and is distinguished from renewing of the Holy Ghost; at least as the general, comprehending that as a part. 1. Most expositors think that the word hath reference to baptism, and expresseth its effects or consequents: and no doubt baptism is for remission of sins, and therefore the laver of regeneration is for remission of sins. 2. The very text maintaineth plainly that grace by which we are saved; by free grace, and that is our free justification as well as free sanctification: and our divines



commonly cite ~~that~~ text against the Papists upon that account, as pleading for free justification: "Not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." Is not saving from the guilt of sin a part of our salvation? What reason to restrain saving here to sanctification only? Doubtless if there were reason to restrain the word Regeneration to either, it would be to justification only; because the giving of the Holy Ghost is next mentioned by itself, but justification is not mentioned at all, if regeneration comprehends it not. And it is certain, that the apostle intendeth not only to tell us, that we are freely sanctified without works, but also that we are freely justified by grace without works. So John iii. 3. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of God;" where he at least hath some respect to baptism, as most suppose, and baptism is for the remission of sins: to be born of water therefore must needs include remission of sin. And this regeneration maketh a man a new creature, and as Paul saith, "in the new creature all things are become new," and not the qualities only. But in the main, Regeneration is the same with Conversion.

4. The word Sanctification also signifieth the same thing for the main, as Conversion doth, only with these small differences following: 1. The word is more comprehensive, for it signifieth our whole state of dedication or devotedness to God, which comprehendeth in it these four things: 1. The change of a man's qualities, whereby he is made fit for the service of God, having his heart bent towards him, and set upon him. 2. The actual dedication or devoting of a man's self to God by faith and a holy covenant; especially in baptism, by solemn vow or engagement. 3. The relation of a person so dedicated or devoted to God, as he is one set apart to him for holy uses, and it is from this relation especially that the word Sanctification is used. 4. The holiness of life that followeth hereupon, in the actual living to God, to whom we are devoted. Sanctification comprehendeth all this, and so comprehends in it Vocation, and somewhat more.

But then perhaps it may be found, that the word is

sometimes, if not often used in Scripture for holiness of the life alone, as presupposing all the rest. Indeed there are more words than one, which we translate Sanctification, which yet are not all of one sense. As *δικαίους*, *δικαίωμα*, and *δικαιοσύνη* differ: so doth *ἁγιασμός*, *ἁγιότης*, and *ἁγιασύνη* differ: but I shall purposely forbear to trouble you with such matters. So that having opened before to you the word Conversion, and now these four, Vocation, Repentance, Regeneration and Sanctification, you may see how far they are the same, or differ. The like may be said of the word Changing, Renewing or making new, and the like, which all signify the same work of God upon the soul.

Those therefore that inquire whether Vocation, Regeneration, Repentance, Sanctification, &c. are the same thing, or divers; and which of them goeth first, &c., must first be resolved of the sense of the term, before they proceed to the matter; for most of these words are used in several senses, and that ambiguity must first be removed.

II. I am next to shew you what it is to be converted and become as little children; which cannot be so well done till I have first given some brief description of the state of a man unconverted: to which end you must know, that God made man perfect, and gave him a perfect law to keep, which commanded perfect obedience upon pain of everlasting death: by the temptation of satan, man broke this law, and cast himself out of the favour of God, and made himself the slave of satan, and the child of death; this he did by a wilful adhering to the creature, and departing from God, so that the nature of man was thus become corrupt; and such as the first man Adam was, such must his posterity needs be, for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean<sup>a</sup>. And how can Adam convey to his posterity that image of God, which he had lost himself, or that right to the favour of God, and further happiness? So that we are all born with corrupted natures, inclined to earth and earthly things, and strange and averse to heaven and heavenly things; prone to evil and backward to good! estranged from God, and making our carnal selves our God; pride, self-love, covetousness, voluptuousness, unbelief, ignorance, error, hypocrisy, ungodliness, strife, contention,

<sup>a</sup> Job xiv. 4.

cruelty and all wickedness have their roots at once in us, and if temptation serve, we shall bring forth the fruit.

This being the state of every man by nature, by practice and custom in sinning men become worse, and the longer they delay before they are converted, the worse usually do they grow, and the further do they go from God, and from their happiness. By all which methinks you may easily see, both what conversion is, and why there is such a necessity of it.

The word Conversion is sometimes taken actively, for that act or work that doth convert us; and sometimes passively, for that change that is thereby wrought: as man is the subject or patient, so is he also an agent in the actual turning of his own soul; so that God and man are both agents in this work. The word here in my text is active, and maketh it the act of man, "except ye convert yourselves:" but we translate it, "be converted:" because the word is used reciprocally, as some speak in Scripture: in a word, God, as the most laudable, principal cause, doth cause man's will to turn itself. So that conversion actively taken, as it is the work of the Holy Ghost, is a work of the Spirit of Christ, by the doctrine of Christ, by which he effectually changeth men's minds, and heart, and life from the creature to God in Christ: conversion, as it is our work, is the work of man, wherein by the effectual grace of the Holy Ghost, he turneth his mind, and heart, and life from the creature to God in Christ. And conversion as taken passively, is the sincere change of a man's mind, heart and life from the creature to God in Christ, which is wrought by the Holy Ghost, through the doctrine of Christ, and by himself thus moved by the Holy Ghost. Here you may see, 1. Who is the cause of this conversion, and what is the means. 2. What is the change wrought. 3. On whom. 4. From what, and to what. 1. The most laudable, principal cause is the Holy Ghost, who is the Sanctifier of the elect. 2. The instrumental cause is the doctrine of Christ, either read, or heard, or some way known, and brought by the Spirit to men's understandings and consideration. 3. Man himself is the subject of the Spirit's operation, and the proper agent of these holy actions of believing, repenting, &c. which the Holy Ghost doth cause him to perform. It is



not the Holy Ghost that believeth, but he causeth man to believe. 4. That which we are turned from, is as to the object, the creature, which sinful man doth adhere to above God ; and as to the act, it is sin, that is, he ceaseth this vicious adhering to the creature. 5. That which man turneth to, is God in and by Christ the Mediator. God hath again the heart of a sinner, when he is converted, and God will be his happiness ; his reformation, recovery, reward and felicity consisteth in this.

The parts of this conversion are these three. I. It is a change of the mind. II. Of the heart. III. Of the life.

I. Conversion changeth the mind.

1. From ignorance.

2. From inconsiderateness.

3. From unbelief.

4. From error.

1. Every unconverted man is ignorant of the saving truths of the Gospel, either by a total ignorance of the thing, or by an insufficient, superficial, ineffectual apprehension of it : the most of the world do not know, what man is by nature and actual sin ; how hateful sin and sinners are to God ; how it deserveth his everlasting wrath, and maketh it our portion ; how Christ hath satisfied and redeemed us from this misery ; and on what terms, and in what order he offereth to man that pardon and life which he hath purchased ; how he will judge them that believe, repent and obey him at last to everlasting glory, and the rest to everlasting misery. Many poor souls are utterly ignorant of these very principles of the Christian religion, in the midst of Gospel-light, and under all our most diligent instructions ; and of those that have some knowledge of them, many know them but superficially and ineffectually.

Now the first thing that the Spirit of God doth either in or to the work of conversion, is to open men's eyes to understand these mysteries : so that, the man that was wont to hear them as a strange thing, as if we spoke Greek or Hebrew to him, is now like a man that is brought out of a dungeon into the open light ; or that hath his eye-sight recovered, and doth not only know these things, but knows them with a somewhat clear and affecting knowledge ; and

is much taken with the light, and rejoiceth in it, and marvelleth at his former ignorance. I shall prove all this to you by Scripture. In 1 Cor. ii. 14. the apostle tells us, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." In 2 Cor. iv. 3. the apostle saith, "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." And then the cure you may see, Acts xxvi. 18. "I send thee to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God." Many poor people think that utter ignorance may stand with grace, and that they may be saved without knowledge because they are not book-learned; but you hear God telleth you otherwise. Many have much brain-knowledge that have no grace, but no man can have grace without solid knowledge: for who can hate sin till he knoweth it, and the evil of it? And who can love God till he know him to be lovely? And who can do the duty that he understandeth not, or go the way to heaven that he is ignorant of? So that this is the first part of the change of the mind from ignorance to knowledge.

2. The second part of the change of the mind, is, from careless inconsiderateness to sober consideration; and this is a great help to all that followeth. - The main reason why we cannot bring men out of love with this vain world, nor to yield to the call of God, and make out after Christ, and their everlasting salvation, is, because we cannot bring them to consideration: men are heady and rash, and drown their own reason with wilfulness, or passion, or worldly businesses, and will not give reason leave to work. Their vicious wills command their understandings to other objects, and will not let them dwell long enough on those that should do them good. All wicked men are inconsiderate men, and therefore inconsiderate, because wicked; and therefore wicked, because inconsiderate. If they hear of the greatest truths in the congregation, they go home and talk of other matters, and all runs out, and they are never the better: we cannot get them to go alone one hour, and

seriously consider of what they heard: ignorance doth much to men's perdition, but inconsiderateness much more. Oh! if that little which our common people know, were but frequently and earnestly considered of, it would not suffer them to be such as they are! Well, but when the Spirit of God comes effectually to convert the soul, he maketh them consider: he awakeneth the sleepy soul, and sheweth them that the matter so nearly concerns them, that if they love themselves, it is time to consider of it: he setteth these truths still before their eyes, which formerly they cast behind their backs; he holdeth their thoughts upon them so, that they must needs consider them. They had heard perhaps an hundred times before of sin, and Christ, and the necessity of conversion, of judgment, and heaven, and hell, but they never thoroughly considered it till now. Oh, this is a great part of the renewing work of the Spirit, to fix a man's thoughts upon the truths of God till they work, and to bring a man's reason to do its office. I will shew you this but in two or three texts of Scripture. In Acts xvii. 11. it is said, that the Jews of Berea had more ingenuity than the rest, "for they searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so, therefore many of them believed:" when they came home they did not turn their thoughts presently to other matters, and think no more of what they had heard, but they took their Bibles, and considered and examined the sermons which they had heard, that they might be resolved whether it were so indeed or not; that if it were so, they might obey it accordingly; and therefore they believed. In Psalm cxix. 59, 60. David saith, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies; I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments:" when he thought of his ways, he turned without delay. And God complaineth of the disobedient Israelites in Isaiah i. 2, 3. that he had nourished and brought up children, and they rebelled against him; and what was the cause? why, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." So that you may see the second part of the conversion of the mind is from inconsiderateness to consideration.

3. The third part of the change of the mind, is, from unbelief to true believing. A customary belief upon the



bare credit of their forefathers, and the common vote of the country they dwell in, most among us may have of the Gospel; but this faith is like the ground of it and will not serve to establish and renew the soul. Men are not soundly persuaded of the infallible truth of all the Word of God till converting grace doth bring them to believe it: they think it may be true, and it may be false for ought they know, they cannot tell: and therefore it is that when we come to those particulars that displease them, they will not believe them. When they do confess in general that the Scripture is true, yet when we tell them particularly of those passages that speak of the necessity of conversion, the difficulty of salvation, the fewness of the saved, and the multitude that shall perish, with many the like truths, they will plainly shew that they do not believe them. A word of such matters of heaven and hell, if it were well believed, would doubtless prevail against sensual allurements, and make them see that they have something else than this deceitful world to look after. Certainly all unconverted sinners are at best but such half believers as in Scripture are called rightly unbelievers. But when the Spirit by the Word doth illuminate their understanding, they see then that all this is most certainly true: that the talk of sin, and misery, and Christ, and grace, and glory, and of everlasting torments to the impenitent are no dreams or doubtful suppositions. God telleth them then to the very heart, that these are matters not to be questioned, but presently and seriously to be regarded: for God will prove true when all men prove liars: heaven and earth shall pass away, but a jot or tittle of his Word shall not pass away till all be fulfilled<sup>b</sup>. Whatever unbelievers think of it now, nothing is more certain than that all men on earth shall shortly find themselves in heaven or hell. Now the soul perceiveth that this is true, as the God of heaven is true, and that it is madness to question the truth of his Word, who is truth itself, and to think that Word will shake or fail which beareth up heaven and earth and is the best security that is possible to be had; and that he should deceive them who never deceived any; and doth so much to save them from being deceived by satan, and their own deceitful hearts. Before conversion

<sup>b</sup> Matt. v. 18.

you might have heard by his cold prayers, and carnal conference, and seen by his careless, sinful life, that he did not heartily believe the Word of God ; but now you may hear, and see by him that he doth believe it. If you tell a man that a bear or a cut-throat thief is following after him, if you see him not stir any faster, nor mend his pace, you will say, sure he doth not believe it ; but if you see him run as for his life, it is a sign that he believes it. When once a man is truly converted, you may see by his affection, and diligence, and self-denial, that he owneth and believeth the Word of God indeed : if you over-heard him in his prayers, his tears, or at least his hearty groans will tell you that he believeth : if he talk with you of his former life, his sobs and sighs, and his deep self-accusings will tell you that he believeth it : his careful endeavours for the saving his soul, his earnest inquiries what he shall do to be saved, will tell you that he believeth. The change of his company, his talk, his life, his casting away those sins with hatred which were his delight, and taking up that holy life with delight which before he had no heart to ; all this will shew that he is now a true believer. Because “ Noah believed, he was moved with fear, and prepared the ark.” He that had seen him at work might perceive that he believed : he would never else have so laboured to escape the danger.

4. The fourth part wherein the change of the understanding doth consist, is, in the healing of men’s errors, and turning them from those false conceits which they had about God and his ways, and the matters of salvation. While they were unconverted, satan had taught them, and the world had taught them, and the flesh had taught them many things against God and their own safety : they were persuaded that either there was no heaven and hell, or that God would save them though they did not much look after it themselves. They thought sin was better than holiness, and it was a more desirable life to please the flesh, and to be honourable, and eat and drink, and be merry, than to live in the thoughts of another world, and deny the flesh that pleasure it desireth, and to spend so much time in reading, hearing, praying and meditating. They thought this was a tedious, unnecessary life, and that all this was more ado

than needs; and that the wisest way was to follow their business in the world, and take their pleasure while they might have it, and only come to church, and forbear some heinous sins, and then believe that God will be merciful to them, and they shall do well enough without all this stir, and that they may take what they can get of the pleasure of the world, and when they have done, if there be any heaven, they may have it with a short repentance when they can keep the world no longer. Abundance more such errors as these are in the minds of unconverted sinners, through the seducements of the deceiver: indeed they live a life of error. Some heretics err in one particular, and some in another, but wicked men err in the very drift of their lives. But when God converteth, he changeth all these opinions. The man is then of another mind. He that thought sin so pleasant, would now fain spit it out; he that desired so to glut himself with the world and sinful delights, would now be rid of them: like a foolish person that will needs take poison, because it is sweet, and will not believe him that tells him it is deadly; but when he feeleth it begin to gripe him in the bowels, and to burn him at the heart, then he crieth out, 'Oh now I believe you that it is poison! Oh give me a vomit that I may cast it up quickly, or else I die.' Then, if you see him retching and straining himself to get it up again, and groaning, and crying out, 'Oh my heart, it burns me, it tears me; Oh that I could get it up!' you may see then that the man's opinion is changed. Sinners, believe it, if ever God will save you, it will be thus with you. You thought there was no great harm in taking now and then a cup with good fellows; in neglecting God and your souls, while you provide for your bodies; in dropping a curse or a small oath in the heat of your passion: you could ask, what harm is it to spend the Lord's day in idleness, or vain-talking, or recreations, when you had a God, and a soul, and an everlasting state to look after, which should have been the business of that day. Perhaps you let down now and then some sharper poison of covetousness, malice, fornication, &c. Oh, but if ever God convert you, all this must up again; you will groan and strain at it by the vomit of repentance, and cry out, 'Oh that I had never known it! Oh that I had never seen the faces of such un-



godly companions! Oh that I could get up the very roots of this sin, I would never return to it again.' You that now think it so grievous a life to be godly, and that there needs not so much ado for your salvation; if ever God convert you, he will make you see that it is both necessary and delightful: you will then say, 'What, shall I sit still when my everlasting salvation is at stake? I have but a little time to make sure of escaping eternal misery: I must very shortly be in heaven or hell; and now is the time that must turn the scales, for then I must be judged according to my works; and is this a time to loiter in? Or is this a matter to be forgotten or made light of?' Oh sinners, if God open your eyes, you will marvel, I tell you, you will a thousand times marvel, that ever you should be so sottish, and in a manner besides yourselves, as to follow your business in the vain world, and eat and drink, and sleep so quietly, while you knew not what should become of you for ever. You will cry out of yourselves, 'Oh where was my wit, that I should make so light of that which was my only business? And that I should sleep out that short time of my life which was given me of purpose to work out my salvation in? And that I should forget that judgment that was told again and again was at the door?' Sinners, if God do once truly convert your souls, you will see, that if wife, children, friend, estate, life require your labour and care, your salvation requireth an hundred times more. You will then say, 'What, can I make too much haste to heaven? Or be at too much care or pains to make sure of it? Can any labour be too much to obtain such a glory, or to escape the flames of everlasting misery? If I lose the world and my life, I may be a saver and a gainer in the life eternal; but if I lose that life, how shall I be a saver? Or which way shall I hope for a reparation of my loss? And what good will it then do me that I had pleasure, or credit, or riches in the world? Is it worth the labour of all my life to rake in this earth, and to live in more plenty of worldly vanity than other men a little while, till I drop into my grave? And is it not worth ten thousand times more care and pains to make sure that I live among the angels, and see the face of God in endless glory?' Oh Lord, where is that man's brains that thinks he can pay too dear for heaven, and yet that all the stir of his life is not too dear a price for earth! To get him

a pleasant passage to his grave, when he might have as much pleasure upon other terms? Where is that man's reason that will be at all this trouble for nothing, and yet will cry out to God, or to his minister, 'What need all this ado to be saved?' Ask a gasping man on his death-bed, whether this labour had not been better laid out for heaven? And whether heaven or earth will pay a man better for his care and pains? What! doth the Lord himself cry out to sinners, "Lay not up for yourselves a treasure on earth, where rust and moth doth corrupt, but lay up for yourselves a treasure in heaven, &c." "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, &c." "Labour not for the food which perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life<sup>d</sup>." And shall men that call themselves Christians say, that this is more ado than needs?

Thus, sinners, will your minds be changed, if ever you be converted: you will then be quite of another mind concerning the world, and God, and the wicked, and the godly, than now you are. I tell you, God will unteach you again all these false opinions about these matters, which the devil, the world, and the flesh have been so long teaching you. It is his work to unteach you first, and then to teach you better things: this will be so. You that now say you will never believe but a man may be saved without so much ado; you will never believe that none shall be saved but those that are thus changed; you will never believe that God maketh so great a matter of sin as preachers talk of: if God will convert and save you, he will make you believe it. Even the most confident of these conceits will be changed. Be not too peremptory, man, God can yet shew thee so much mercy as to change thy mind: he hath changed as self-conceited men's minds as thine, and hath shaken as confident opinions as these: Paul thought himself as wise as you, before his conversion, and telleth us, "I verily thought myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus." But when God had struck him down, and amazed him with his glory, and then illuminated him with his saving light, he cried out, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" Acts ix. 6. And this with trembling and astonishment. And Tit. iii. 3. He telleth you what

<sup>d</sup> Matt. vi. 19, 20, 33. John vi. 27.

he thought then of his former courses: "We ourselves were sometime foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures;" but how was he healed? ver. 4, 5. "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." You say you will never be of another mind; aye, but God can make you of another mind: his light cannot be overcome by your darkness, if he mean you so much mercy as to shine in upon your souls. This is the fourth part of the change of men's understandings from error to saving truth in the matters of salvation.

11. The second part of the work of conversion is upon the Heart or Will, to which this change of the mind or understanding is preparative: and in this change of the heart, there are these several parts observable. 1. The will is brought to like what it disliked, and to dislike what it liked before. 2. It is brought to choose what it refused; and to consent to that which it would not consent to. 3. It is brought to resolve, where it was, either resolved on the contrary, or unresolved. 4. The several Affections are changed, of love and hatred, desire and aversion, delight and sorrow, hope and despair, courage and fear, and anger, and content, and discontent. In all these respects the converted is changed, which we must therefore speak of in their order.

1. The first change that God maketh on the heart or will in the work of conversion (after the preparatory works which we now pass over) is, in the complacency or displacency of it: he causeth that to savour or relish as sweet to the will, which before was bitter: the soul receiveth a new inclination; it liketh that which before it disliked, not only by a mere approbation, but by a willing closure of the heart therewith. So that, these two things, a New Inclination, and a New Complacency, do go to make up this first part of the work. Before conversion the very bent of man's mind is toward the things below, and his heart is against the things of God: he relisheth the things below as sweet; and it pleaseth him to possess them, or to think of possessing them, but he hath no pleasure in God, nor in thinking or hearing of the life to come: all things please or displease



a man, according as they agree or disagree to his inclination; and as they seem to him either suitable or unsuitable. Things do not please or displease according to their own goodness or badness, but according to the qualification of him that apprehendeth or entertaineth them. To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet, but the full soul loatheth the honey-comb<sup>d</sup>. What life can be more pleasant to a glutton or drunkard, than to pour in and stuff their paunch? And to any sharp stomach, how good is their meat? But when a man is sick, there is scarce a greater torment than to eat or drink, when the stomach goeth against it. Oh how they loathe it, and cannot get it down! They had rather cast the daintiest fare into the channel, than take it into their stomachs; so it is with the sick, unrenewed soul: he hath no pleasure in God, nor any holy things: it goeth against his heart to think of them, or seriously to speak or hear much of them. He marvelleth how other men can find so much delight in reading, and hearing, and praying, and the like; for his part he is weary to bear it; though for fashion, or fear of God's wrath he comes to church, or saith over a few words of hypocritical, heartless prayer, yet he usually makes no long matter of it; but he longeth till it be done, and he is glad when it is over; therefore the Scripture calleth such, enemies to God, and haters of him; for their hearts are not with him, though with their tongues they may draw near him<sup>e</sup>. I know it is a very common thing with almost all men to profess that God hath more of their hearts than their pleasures, profits, or any thing else; but it hath blinded them so, that they know not themselves: otherwise it would be a very easy matter for them to perceive that their very hearts are turned away from God. Many poor sinners are even willing to cheat their souls with a lie, when they might know that their hearts have no delight in God; but that the very thoughts of him and of his word, and service, and everlasting life, are rather grievous to them; and as the psalmist saith, "God is not in all their thoughts." "The Lord knoweth their thoughts, that they are vain<sup>f</sup>."—Well, this is then the first change that God by his renewing grace doth make upon the heart; he turneth it

<sup>d</sup> Prov. xxvii. 7.<sup>e</sup> Isa. xxix. 13. Matt. xv. 3.<sup>f</sup> Psal. x. 4. xciv. 11.

to himself, he giveth it a new inclination and bias : he first openeth men's eyes to see God's excellency and the excellency of those glorious things which he hath promised ; and thereby draweth their hearts unto them. It is a great and difficult matter to set the heart of man upon heaven, but God can do it, and doth it in this great change. I know the best are still earthly in part, and too much in the dark, and too backward to the things of God, and God hath not near that room in their hearts as he deserves, and as they could wish he had : yet a wonderful change is made on them : they that had no savour of God and glory before, do now savour nothing else so much ; they can truly say as David, though perhaps not so feelingly as he, " Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee <sup>g</sup>." He that scarce thought of God before, now his mind runs upon him ; now his thoughts are, whether God be reconciled to him, or not : and how God approveth of him, and his ways : were he sure of his favour he would think himself happy : could he but know him, and enjoy him more, he had the very desire of his heart. It is his greatest trouble that he is no nearer him, and no more fit to please and honour him ; and God hath no more room in his heart. Unfeignedly he grudgeth at the remnants of sin, that they should so weary and grieve the Spirit of God, and hinder his more sensible enjoyment of his love ; it grieveth him that any of that room in his heart should be taken up by fleshly and worldly vanities, which he knoweth doth of right belong to Christ. It is his care to give him yet better entertainment, and to get out those remnants of sin and vanity, that God at last may have it all to himself. It is his daily business to sweep out this dung, and dress up his disordered heart for Christ ; and glad he is when he can but find any signs of his presence, and feeleth any stirring of his grace ; and when he can but move towards him more swiftly by a stronger love ; this is the true condition and temper of a converted soul ; all other men do but talk of God, but it is only these that give him their heart. Sirs, I would fain make this as plain as I can to you, and I would fain have you try as we go along, whether this change has been made in your own hearts or not. You know that

<sup>g</sup> Psal. lxxiii. 25.

there is something or other that every man is most pleased in, and his mind is most towards ; and this complacency and bent of the mind, is the very spring of almost all his conversation ; but if he have no pleasure in it, nor mind to it, he will neglect it, whatsoever you can say or do. Here is the true root of the difference between the hearts of the carnal, and of the spiritual : before a man is converted, his mind is not towards God, but upon other things ; but afterwards nothing is so near and dear to him. Mark the discovery of both these states, Rom. viii. 5—9. “ For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh ; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death ; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God : for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” Here you see in the very words of the Holy Ghost a plain description of these two different conditions of men ; till a man be converted, his mind is more on his fleshly pleasure or commodity, or credit in the world, than in God or the happiness of the world to come. Whatsoever he may say or pretend to the love of God, yet God knoweth that his mind is another way : but when converting grace comes, it taketh off the old bias, and setteth on a new one ; and now the man that was carnally minded is become spiritually minded. Sinners, if you would but enter into your own hearts, and ask them what it is that seemeth best to you in all the world ; what it is that most pleaseth you ; what you would have if you might have your choice ; by this you might know the bent of your mind ; and so know whether you are indeed converted, or not. You think, it may be, that you may have worldly and fleshly minds, and yet have grace too : and that you may set your hearts most upon your fleshly and worldly pleasures, and yet be the children of God ; but deceive not yourselves, it cannot be : believe it, it cannot be. Oh that those men did think of this, that drown their hearts in the cares of this life ; or wilfully run on in gluttony, drunkenness, or other fleshly delights. If ever you escape the torments you have



deserved, if ever you will see the face of God in peace, those hearts must be turned quite another way; those delights must grow bitter to you: you must be ashamed of your present pleasure<sup>h</sup>. And your souls must abhor them in comparison of Christ, and even abhor yourselves for all your abominations<sup>i</sup>. And cast them all away as dross and dung, and account all as loss for the winning of Christ, which now you think your greatest gain<sup>k</sup>. Oh sinners, how low will all these things be then in your hearts? When you look upon all the glory of this world, it will be no more lovely than a dead carcase in your eyes: for you will be crucified to the world, and the world to you. If a man would then offer you all the kingdoms and glory of the earth, it would be but as a chip to you, it would stink in your thoughts if it tended to deprive you of everlasting glory. Many infirmities may stand with grace, but a carnal or worldly mind in a prevailing sense cannot. “Love not the world nor the things of the world, for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him<sup>m</sup>.” I know there are few men so foolish and ungodly, but will say with their tongues, that God is better than the creature, and heaven than earth, and would give it as their judgment under their hand, and confirm it with an oath, that they do not dissemble: yea, but the question is of the inclination and complacency of their hearts; which do these men love better, and which do they mind as the most suitable good? Never tell me that their estimation of God is sincere, unless it affect the heart with an answerable complacency and inclination to him: they may apprehend it as truth that God is the chief good, but they do not truly, that is thoroughly, apprehend it.

But when converting grace comes, it doth this work. I know when the best Christians have reached to the greatest knowledge of God, and sense of his love, which in this life they may expect, they will still be looking higher after more. And the apprehension of that which they yet come short of, will much darken the apprehension of their present attainment: infiniteness will quite overmatch both our apprehensions and our affections: but though we are ready to

<sup>h</sup> Rom. vi. 21.      <sup>i</sup> Ezek. xxxvi. 21.      <sup>k</sup> Phil. iii. 8, 9.

<sup>m</sup> 1 John ii. 15.

call our present glimpse and taste of God, a very nothing, when we compare our knowledge of him with our ignorance, and our enjoyments with our wants ; yet when we compare these small things with all the pleasures or profits of this world, we see that we have chosen the better part. Alas, the poor converted soul hath quickly a taste of the vanity of this world in the very first heart-breaking and humbling that he was brought into ; when his sin is set in order before him, and the voice of the law doth make his heart to tremble, and an angry God doth look him into terrors, what then can all the world do for his relief ? How sensibly then doth he say, Oh, silly comforters ! what should I do if I had no better hopes ! Oh, what contemptuous thoughts and speeches then hath he of all these things that he once so much valued ! He thinketh he can scarce find words that are base enough for them. If he could find worse than Paul's losses, and dross, and dung, and dogs-meat, he would do it. O that men would now in the day of their prosperity bethink themselves of this, which all shall know at last. It is a most doleful sight to any man of wisdom and compassion to see men that have wounded and loaden consciences, to run up and down, after pleasure and profit, as if these would heal them, which have made their wounds ; men that are even undone for want of healing, and are within a step of hell, and will certainly and very speedily be there, if Christ, by saving, renewing grace, do not recover them, do quite forget the nature of their distress, and the thing they want, and mind the toys of worldly things, as if they would save them. What, still is sin sweet to you, when it hath made such work against your souls ? Still is this world so lovely in your eyes, when it hath enticed you already to the very brink of hell ? Oh poor bewitched souls, that will dote upon that which you confess deceiveth you ! That will dig your own graves with such excessive pains, and purchase a room in everlasting torments at so dear a rate ? Well, if ever God will have mercy on your souls, he will show you another kind of pleasure and felicity ; he will acquaint you with that which shall be worth your labour ; he will bring those sick dis-tempered souls to another relish than now they have. He will make you spit out this dirt and dung, and thirst for the

living water that shall spring up in you to everlasting life<sup>n</sup>. And instead of your over-eager seeking the food that perisheth, he will make you hunger after the bread of life<sup>o</sup>. What the unsanctified man doth most love, we may see by experience; we see what he seeks after partly by his life; and will you see out of Scripture yet more fully which way the heart of the sanctified is inclined? "The love of God is shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost<sup>p</sup>." They "are confident that nothing can separate them from this love, neither height nor breadth<sup>q</sup>, &c." They can sometimes appeal to Christ himself with Peter, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee<sup>r</sup>." "Oh how I love thy Law!" said David, "it is my meditation day and night, yea, I love them exceedingly<sup>s</sup>," saith he; "above gold<sup>t</sup>," above their appointed or necessary food<sup>u</sup>," saith Job. "Thy word was the joy and rejoicing of my heart<sup>x</sup>," saith Jeremiah. So vehement was Paul against those men that could not love the Lord of love, that he pronounceth them accursed with the greatest curse<sup>y</sup>. "Thy law," saith David, "is within my heart. How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord, my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, in whose hearts are the ways of them. My soul breaketh for the longing it hath to thy judgments at all times. Thou art my God, early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee; to see thy power and thy glory as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live, I will lift up my heart in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night season<sup>z</sup>."

2. The second part of the change of the heart is in its intents. Conversion setteth a man upon right ends. All the work of a man's life lieth in intending certain ends, and

<sup>n</sup> John iv. 14.

<sup>o</sup> John vi. 17.

<sup>p</sup> Rom. v. 5.

<sup>q</sup> Rom. viii. 39.

<sup>r</sup> John xxi. 15.

<sup>s</sup> Psal. cxix. 167.

<sup>t</sup> Ver. 127.

<sup>u</sup> Chap. xxiii. 12.

<sup>x</sup> Chap. xv. 16.

<sup>y</sup> 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

<sup>z</sup> Psal. xl. 8. lxxxiv. 1, 2. cxix. 20. lxxiii. 1—3.



using certain means to obtain them. And all the work of Christianity lieth in intending right ends, and in using right means to obtain them. The chief part of man's corruption in his depraved natural state, doth consist in this, that he intendeth wrong ends: that is a man's end, which he accounteth his felicity, his treasure, his chiefest good, and which he useth all things else to obtain. Whatsoever you think the best thing in the world for you, and had rather have it than any thing else; and whatsoever you principally seek after in your life, and think yourself most happy if you could obtain it, and think yourself most miserable if you miss of it, and therefore had rather lose all than that, and make it your main business to be sure that you may enjoy it, that, and nothing else but that, is your end. In general, every man's happiness is his end, and this nature itself, as nature, doth so far adhere to, and intend, that no man can do otherwise, and there is no note of man's not intending this. But generals are nothing, but as they are found in particular things: when it comes to the particular object of fruition, and what it is wherein men's happiness doth consist, there it is that the depraved nature doth most damnably err. For every carnal man doth apprehend it the best condition for him to enjoy his carnal pleasure, and profit, and vain-glory in this world; or if he look for a life to come, he would have it consist of such kind of pleasures as he here enjoyed in this life; and, therefore, his very heart is most set upon these sensual worldly things: he hath a nature so suitable to them, that he savoureth these as the sweetest delights, and things fittest for him; and, therefore, his very business, and daily care and work in the world, is to get, or increase, or keep, or enjoy and draw out the sweetness of these sensual things. So that an earthly man hath an earthly mind, and earthly ends, as Christ said to Nicodemus<sup>z</sup>. That which is born of the earth is earthly; and a fleshly man hath a fleshly mind, and fleshly ends, as I before shewed, from Rom. viii. 7. they cannot see in the love of God, or the enjoyment of him, so certain, so suitable a good for them, as may be their felicity, and better to them than these earthly things. Either they doubt whether the happiness which they see not be

<sup>z</sup> John iii. 6.

true, or a mere delusion; or else they think that it is too far off, and a place too strange to them to be their felicity. They think that God and man are at too great a distance to be so mutually loved, and that he is so strange to us, as to be an unsuitable object for our highest love. Nay, because of his holiness, justice, and the other blessed perfections of his nature, and because he will judge the ungodly world unto perdition; therefore their hearts are even against him, and they that call him their God, have a secret enmity to him. So that, before conversion, it is the sinful miserable state of all men, that God is not their end; he hath not their hearts. It is not he that they most seek after in their lives, nor in whom their souls apprehend the chiefest delight and felicity to consist. But it is in the fleshly pleasures, or profits, or honour of this world. It is some creature, and not God, that hath men's hearts, their care, and earnest diligence.<sup>a</sup> Hence it is, that they are said to "have their portion in this life," *Psa. xviii. 14.* and are there called "the men of the world." They are such as "lay up a treasure on earth<sup>a</sup>." They think none can shew them any greater good, and apprehend not the joy of the light of God's countenance<sup>b</sup>. They seek only "what they shall eat or drink, or wherewith they shall be clothed," for this is the custom of the "nations of the world<sup>c</sup>." "They make light of Christ," and the kingdom that he promiseth, in comparison of their farms, their oxen, their worldly wealth and pleasure<sup>d</sup>. "They lay up treasures for themselves here, but are not rich towards God<sup>e</sup>." If they have abundance, they cheer their souls, as having "enough for many years," and so resolve to "eat, drink, and be merry<sup>f</sup>." If they are called by a trial to part with all for Christ, and the hope of everlasting glory, "they go away sorrowful because of their riches," or the dearness of that which they are called to forsake. In a word, they are such as a compassionate man should mention with tears, "they are enemies to the cross of Christ," though not always to his name. "Their end is destruction, their God is their belly, their glory is in their shame, they mind earthly things<sup>g</sup>." They "make provision for the flesh

<sup>a</sup> *Matt. vi. 18, 19.*<sup>b</sup> *Psalm, iv. 6, 7.*<sup>c</sup> *Luke xii. 29—31.*<sup>d</sup> *Luke xii. 21. Matt. xxii. 5.*<sup>e</sup> *Luke xii. 21.*<sup>f</sup> *Luke xii. 19.*<sup>g</sup> *Phil. iii. 19.*

to fulfil the lusts thereof<sup>h</sup>.” They have their “good things in this life,” when the godly have their “evil things,” and therefore when others “are comforted, they shall be tormented<sup>i</sup>.” All these Scriptures declare to you what are the ends of unconverted men, and where are their hearts. “For where their treasure is, there will their hearts be<sup>k</sup>.”

But when the Spirit comes with converting grace, the very ends and intents of a man are changed: as he findeth the greatest excellency in God, and the things of the life to come; so hath he there laid up his treasure<sup>l</sup>, and fixed his hopes: he hath reckoned what the world is worth, and how much it can afford him, and how long it will last him, and what it will do for him in the greatest need; and upon certain knowledge of its vanity and insufficiency he hath resolved that this cannot make him happy. If ever you be converted, you will know all this to be true by experience that I say: that it is the work of converting grace to make a man consider whether all that he can hope for in this world will make him indeed a happy man, and upon consideration he findeth it will not serve his turn. God bringeth it now close to his thoughts and affections, so that the mere splendour, and sugared taste, and glozing appearances of worldly things cannot deceive him as formerly they did; but he understandeth now the utmost they can do for him; he considereth how that they do but flatter him into the grave and hell, and leave him when he is in the depth of his distress: before he was as the prodigal, that thought it hard keeping to live in his father’s house, but abroad and among his companions and pleasures he would go; but when he comes to himself, he finds that he must home again, or perish with hunger: the poor soul then layeth all these things to heart; alas, thinks he, I may be merry a few days more if I hold on in this company and course, but will this life last for ever? I may be somebody in the world for a while, if I can be rich or honourable; but how long can I keep it when I have got it? I may please my mind among my friends and worldly businesses, my corn and cattle, my pleasures and prosperity; but what shall I do shortly when these things are gone? I may think now that I can live

<sup>h</sup> Rom. xiii. 12, 14.<sup>i</sup> Luke xvi. 25.<sup>k</sup> Matt. vi. 21.<sup>l</sup> Matt. vi. 20.



without the favour of God, but can I do so when I have nothing else to live on? Alas! is that fit to be instead of God and heaven to me, that will not keep me out of the grave, nor keep my strongest or most beautiful parts from rotting in the dust; no, nor keep my soul from everlasting torments? Oh, what shall I do if I have not a better portion than this? Woe to me that ever I was born, if I be not better provided for before I die! Thus doth God take off the soul in conversion from its former ends, and makes it say, Lord, these will not serve my turn; O put me not off with such things as these. When the soul is thus loosened from its former delight, and seeth that it must be something else that must be his happiness; then doth the Spirit by the word of God reveal to him the certainty and the fulness of that glory that is to be had by Christ in the everlasting love and fruition of God; and then he sees that though it be not here to be had, yet it is to be had hereafter; and that man was made to higher things than he hath hitherto minded. Now he begins to bethink himself in good sadness, that heaven may be had, and that for him as well as others; the impossibility is taken away by Christ, and the door is set open; the glory is inconceivable, and if he can but once get it he is made for ever. These thoughts now work in the heart of the man that never had such lively working thoughts of it before. So that now he feeleth his heart burn within him, when he hath once found where his happiness is to be had; presently, the Spirit having touched his heart with an effectual inclination thereto, he is bent upon it, and sets his heart and face to seek it. And now this is his business; comparatively he hath nothing else to do. Now it must be God or none; heaven, or nothing that will serve his turn. Now if God should offer him, 'I will give thee mirth and riches for a thousand years without interruption, I will give thee the good word of all about thee, I will make thee the greatest man on earth, and thou shalt have the world at will; but not my love and grace in Christ, nor the hope of everlasting glory:' this would be the saddest news that ever came to his soul. It is not now the same thing that would please him as before. Tell not him now of profit and pleasure; it is everlasting pleasure that he must have. He hath another journey to go, another home

to regard, another kind of trade to drive on in the world than before he had. Now he “looketh for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God;” and therefore doth take himself but as a stranger on earth, and one that sojourneth in a foreign country<sup>1</sup>. Now the best of worldly things will no longer satisfy them; but they “desire a better country, that is, an heavenly. Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city<sup>m</sup>.” Now they are soundly persuaded that “there is a God, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him;” and that this reward is beyond the grave, and therefore they have respect to the recompence of reward, and are content to submit to the sufferings of this life, that so they may obtain a better resurrection<sup>n</sup>. He now is to this world as a dead man in comparison; “crucified to the world, and the world to him<sup>o</sup>.” “And his life is hid with Christ in God; and when Christ, who is his life, shall appear, then shall he appear also with him in glory<sup>p</sup>.”

Beloved hearers, you may easily conceive that it is a very great change, that causeth a man to have other ends than ever he had before, and that quite turneth the very bent of his heart and life, and maketh him have quite a contrary business in the world, than before he had; that setteth a man's face another way, so that he that before went one way, doth now go the clean contrary. Alas! it is not the restraint of a wicked work or two, or the outward civilizing of your lives, that is true conversion. It is such a change as I am now describing to you, that turneth you quite another way. If you are true Christians that hear me, you know it, or may know it, to be thus with yourselves. For certainly you have had experience of this in your souls. It were no impossible thing for you now, if you were but willing, to know certainly whether you be converted, yea or no. One would think that a man's end might be discerned above all things. Cannot you know what you like and love best? And what you would fain have? And what you cannot be content without? And what you drive at in the course of your lives? And what you place your hopes and happiness in, which you will have, though you part with all to get it?

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xi. 9, 10, 13.<sup>m</sup> Heb. xi. 16.<sup>n</sup> Heb. xi. 6, 26, 35.<sup>o</sup> Gal. vi. 14.<sup>p</sup> Col. iii. 3, 4.

And what it is that beareth down all things else in your hearts and lives? Why something or other doth this, whatsoever it be, and this is your end. And one would think, that this which so much takes one up, and so much sways, and is the business of his life, might be well discerned. Sirs, deal truly between God and your souls. What hath your hearts? What game do you follow? What do you mind above all? I ask not whether you set not a foot now and then out of the way: but which way are you travelling? For earth or for heaven? O that you would but be faithful to your souls in this trial! I have often told you, and will tell you yet again, and desire you to remember it as long as you live, that this is the true difference between every true converted soul, and all hypocrites and carnal men in the world; 'That to the true Christian indeed, God and everlasting glory is his main end, and religion is his business, and all worldly things come in but upon the bye, and therefore he can have them, or be without them; whereas with all hypocrites and carnal men, the pleasing of their flesh in this world, is their main end, and therefore worldliness, voluptuousness, or ambition is their business, and the matters of God and religion come in but upon the bye, and therefore they can taste of them, or they can be without them.' I would you would keep this one mark by you while you live: by which you may judge yourselves without deceit; and so the true Christian need not deny his sincerity, nor the hypocrite imagine that he is what he is not, but might certainly know that he is yet in the flesh. And thus I have shewn you what is the second part of Conversion of the Will or Heart, even the change of a man's ends and intentions.

3. The third part of the work of Conversion on the Will, is this, The same Spirit in the word, which changeth a man's ends, doth also change him as to the choice of means, and causes him to choose what before he refused, and to consent to that which before he did reject. Heaven is not obtained in every way, but in God's own way, and if a man should never so much intend God as his end, and yet not seek him in the means of his appointment, (though I think there is none that doth so, or that ever these indeed are separated, yet I say, if such a thing were,) it would not save him. It is



not enough to know where we must be happy, but we must also know how to come thither. There is but one right way to salvation in the main, and he that will be saved, must be sure to hit it.

(1) There are two sorts of means or ways to salvation ; not contrary, but one subordinate to the other ; but one is the chief and principal way, and that is Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost ; the other is the subservient way, and that is the means that Christ hath appointed under himself. When man was lost, there was no remedy for him in heaven or earth, but the ever-living Son of God to come down from heaven, and take our nature, and perfectly obey the law, and suffer for our disobedience ; this he did in compassion to mankind. He was born of a virgin, without man, and without sin, by the power of the Holy Ghost. He lived on earth without sin also, and proved his Godhead and doctrine by his works ; he raised the dead, healed the lame, the blind, the sick, and at last offered himself on the cross a sacrifice for our sins, in suffering that which we must else have suffered ; and being buried, he rose again on the third day, and after forty days in the sight of his disciples, ascended into heaven, where he is now in our nature interceding for us, and preparing us a place. And before he departed from earth, he ordained this law, and sent his disciples to preach it to all the world ; that all they that would renounce their own works, and trust their souls upon his redemption and ransom, and forsake the world, the flesh, and the devil, and take him for their only Lord and Saviour, and so return to God himself, shall receive the pardon of all their sin, and be made the heirs of everlasting glory. And he hath promised also to send his sanctifying Spirit to dwell and work in those that believe. Thus you see what is the principal means of salvation : it is the Lord Jesus Christ, who having suffered for us, is offered to us in the Gospel, to be our Head and Husband, our Saviour and our Lord.

Two things are here of absolute necessity to our salvation : the one is, to believe unfeignedly that Christ is the Messiah and Redeemer of the world : and the second is, to accept him as he is offered to us in the Gospel. Now the heart of an unconverted sinner is against both these. 1. It doth not soundly believe the truth of Christ's incarnation, resurrec-

tion, and ascension, but only by a common, customary, superficial belief: but of this I spoke before. 2. He doth not welcome Christ to his soul, as he is offered to him; partly because men are unhumbled and feel not the need of Christ; for "the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick:" and partly, because that Christ would reclaim them from the way that they take pleasure in, and would bring them into a way that is against their hearts; and many other causes there are. So that, even where Christ seemeth to be much honoured, and men will bow, and do the greatest reverence to his name, and profess themselves his faithful servants, and that they trust their salvation on him alone: yet for all this they do not savingly or sincerely believe in him. They have learned to speak well of Christ, and they are willing to be forgiven by him; but they never laid hold on him, as a drowning man would do on that which might save him; nor did they ever feel at their hearts, what a glorious work of mercy he hath wrought in their redemption; and how much he hath done for them, and how much he hath engaged their souls unto himself. They never had any of the saints' admiration at the height, and breadth, and length, and depth<sup>a</sup>, nor have they been taken up with this astonishing project of love, as men thus redeemed at such a rate must be; nor would they ever consent that Christ should rule over them, and mortify their lusts, and bring them back from the flesh to God: and therefore they are unbelievers, even while they profess the faith of Christ. But when converting grace comes, as it raiseth the soul's estimation of Christ, as I have said before, so doth it open the heart to his entertainment. O what glad news is it to desolate, self-condemned souls to hear that the Son of God hath bought them with his blood! It is life to them to hear the glad tidings of their redemption. It is the very work of the Spirit in conversion, to bring the soul into this admiration of redemption; and to shew it the riches of grace in Christ, and the mystery of this blessed work, when his eyes are opened to see how God designed here the magnifying of his love; and how glorious God is in his mercy in the work of redemption, even as glorious as in his power in the work of creation. And when his wounded soul hath well understood

<sup>a</sup> Eph. iii. 18.

how Christ hath made him a plaster of his blood, this makes him have other thoughts of Christ and redemption than before he had. O how much sweeter to him are the hearing, and reading, and thinking of this Christ, than before they were! He that before did shut the door, and let Christ knock and knock again, and could so often churlishly resist him; O how the case is now altered with him! Now Christ is to him as cordial waters to a man in a swoon; as a hand to a drowning man; as drink to a man in a burning fever; as a pardon to a man condemned to die: the name of Christ doth even revive him, when withal he can but have some hope that he is his. O could you now assure him that Christ is willing to pass over all his unkind resistance, and to be friends with him, and wash his soul in his blood, how glad a man would he be! When sin stares him in the face, O then for a Christ to make his peace! When conscience is up in arms against him, now how doth Christ befriend him, to step in and bear the stroke! He saith not as Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord that I should serve him?" Nor as they in Job xxi. 14. "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways:" nor as the common rebels of the world, "We will not have this man to reign over us<sup>r</sup>:" but as Laban to Abraham's servants, "Come in thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without? For the house and room is prepared for thee<sup>s</sup>." Too long have I made my soul a sink, a sty, a dungeon, when it might and should have been thy dwelling, and the temple of thy Holy Spirit. Come in, Lord, and let sin possess thy room no longer. Hath here been room for the world, and room for fleshly lusts and pleasures, and is there no room for thee? Let thy graces dwell where sin hath dwelt; here is room for them all; or if there be not room, O cast out sin, and make thee room. Thou that madest all things ready for me, before thou calledst me by the voice of the Gospel, make all within me ready for thyself, and cast out him that is stronger than I, and hath held my heart so long in a peaceable captivity. Only thy presence now will do me good: I die if thou revive me not: I am devoured by the jaws of the devouring lion, if thou do not rescue me. I am tormented by my own conscience, and nothing but thine applied blood can mollify it.

<sup>r</sup> Luke xix. 27.<sup>s</sup> Gen. xxiv. 31.



I am accused and condemned by the law, which I have broken, and what shall I say or do, if thou come not in, and plead thy blood, and answer for me? I have many thousand sins that will be brought in against me; and how shall I come off, but by the virtue of thy sacrifice? Hell is ready to devour me everlastingly, if thou do not save me. Save me, save me, Lord, or I perish! I am lost, undone, a damned man if thou do not save me. The devils that have deceived me, do but stay to torment me if thou do not save me. A just and angry God will be to me everlastingly a consuming fire, if his indignation be not quenched by thy blood and intercession. There is no other name under heaven by which I can be saved<sup>1</sup>. No, no, it must be Christ alone, it must be Christ or none, Christ, or I am lost. Now doth the poor soul look upon Christ as on the fire or air, that he cannot live without; he sees an absolute necessity for him in the main, and an absolute necessity for every particular. Every sin that he remembereth, telleth him that he hath need of Christ. Every corruption that he feeleth stirring within him, telleth him of the absolute need of Christ. Every temptation that assaulteth him, telleth him of the need of Christ. He never falleth into any known sin again, (which alas! is too often,) but it maketh him see the need of Christ. He findeth he could not live a day or an hour safely without him: he cannot wash away one spot, nor master one corruption without him. When he goes to God in prayer for his soul, he then findeth the need of Christ; he dare not draw near if Christ take him not by the hand; he knows there is no admittance in any other name. He durst not look God in the face, nor name him, nor worship him, nor hope for any mercy from him, but through Christ. In a word, without Christ he dares neither live nor die. You see then where another part of conversion lieth in this true belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. You may know and say all this of Christ before conversion; but you never rightly apprehend it and feel it, till then.

And as the merit, so the Spirit of Christ is here comprehended; for I join both together for brevity. It is by his Spirit that Christ takes down the strong contradiction of the flesh, and bringeth all in subjection to himself; as light

<sup>1</sup> Acts iv. 12.

prevaileth against darkness, and strength against weakness, and life against death, so doth the Spirit prevail for Christ in the souls of the elect. Before conversion, there is nothing but grieving and striving against, and quenching the Spirit, and using it like an enemy. But now how glad is the soul of his presence! how loath to grieve him! how fearful of quenching it! And if by some unkindness the Spirit seem to be withdrawn, what moan doth he make! and how sadly doth he cry out as David did; "Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me by thy free Spirit<sup>u</sup>:" and if he feel the Spirit as it were, departing from him, he calls aloud with David, "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy Spirit from me<sup>x</sup>." As a living man is loath to die, and knoweth that when his Spirit is gone from his body, he will be a carcase, and therefore will use all possible means to keep the soul and body from parting, even so the true believer knows that if the Spirit of God were gone from his soul, the soul were dead or worse than dead, and therefore it is his daily care to keep the Spirit and his soul from parting. He apprehendeth it now to be a blessed privilege indeed, to have the Spirit of Jesus still within him, to be his temple, and by him to be preserved from temptation, excited to duties, and animated in them, and sanctified to the service of him that did redeem him.

And now sirs, I must needs say to those of you that are unconverted, that all these matters are strange to you; you hear me, but you have felt no such things as these within yourselves. Oh what a difference is there between this living faith in Christ, and the name of faith, and the image of Christianity, which you boast of and presume upon! What a difference is there between these warm heart-reviving closures with Christ, and your cold belief and dull profession! It is one thing for Christ to dwell in the heart by faith, and another thing for him to have the custom of the country, and the law of the land on his side, to make way for him. It is one thing for a man that is well, to honour a physician, and another thing for a sick man to seek out to him, and beg his help, and take him for his physician, and willingly take down any thing that he giveth him.

<sup>u</sup> Psal. li. 12.<sup>x</sup> Ver. 11.

I pray you mark what I say, because it is the most common delusion of unconverted men among us, that they verily think that they truly believe in Christ already : and there is a common belief that will never save them, and that they take up with, and look not after the saving faith : I cannot better open the difference to ordinary capacities, than by the aforesaid comparison. You know a man in health may truly believe that such a man is an able physician, and he may speak well of him, and honour him : now suppose a man were deadly sick of a consumption, and did not know it ; if this man honoureth the physician as much as any other healthful man, will this cure him, or save his life ? No, but the patient that prayeth him to come to him, and will trust his life in his hands, and will take the bitterest medicine that he gives him, and will forbear any hurtful meat or drink, be it never so pleasant to him, this is he that is like to be healed by him. Christ is known among us to be the able physician of souls ; we all confess and praise his skill, and know that he can save us. We all hear of the freeness of his cure, that he takes nothing, but doth it as soon for the poorest beggar, as the greatest prince ; but knowing all this, and speaking well of him, will cure no man ; no, but you must go to him believingly, and beg his help, and take him for your physician, and trust your souls upon his blood and Spirit, and apply his means, and take the bitterest cup that he shall reach you, and forsake the morsels of fleshly pleasure that have been sweet to you heretofore. Do not say, this is to be justified by works ; for this is no other kind of works than what standeth in a necessary subserviency to Christ, even the work of grace itself. This is but the work that Christ calls thee to, John vi. 29. “ This is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom the Father hath sent : ” this is but “ coming to Christ that ye may have life <sup>y</sup> : ” and “ taking his yoke and burden on you, that you may find rest to your souls <sup>z</sup> . ” When the poor people followed him on earth from place to place, and hearkened to his words, and took up his cross that they might be his disciples, and be justified and saved by him ; he did not tell them, this is sinful working for justification. To conclude, if ever you be converted,

<sup>y</sup> John v. 40.

<sup>z</sup> Matt. xi. 29.



thus must you follow Christ, and thus must you yield to the Spirit which you now resist.

Thus I have shewed you how the converted soul doth accept of Christ and the Spirit, on the terms and to the ends that are mentioned in the Gospel. Christ Jesus is accepted as the Redeemer of their souls, that hath satisfied justice by being a ransom for their sins, and hath merited everlasting glory for them; and as the Lord that by the title of his redemption, must rule them; as their head that must provide for them and supply all their wants; and as the fountain and treasure of all that grace that must save them; the Holy Ghost is entertained as he that must sanctify and guide them in the way to life everlasting, having already sealed the truth of the doctrine.

2. We are next to consider how the work of conversion doth turn the heart or will of man to these means that stand in a subordination to Christ: and indeed a natural man is disaffected not only to Christ, but to all his ordinances: he that mindeth not the end nor the means, cannot heartily mind the subordinate means.

(1.) One means that God hath appointed to salvation, is, confession of sin, with a broken heart for the sin confessed. A man unconverted doth neither see any such evil in sin as to drive him to this confession, nor to break his heart in godly sorrow; nor will his heart be brought to consent to the faithful performance of that. A heart unhumbled and unchanged doth think it but a piece of childish folly to weep and mourn for sin, and lament it before the world: they are too stout to stoop to a disgraceful acknowledgment: they scorn to be so base as to make an open confession of their sins, or to lament their misery. They feel no such burden upon their consciences as should drive them into such repentance to seek to God and man for ease; and if they confess to God in secret, it is without a broken heart; they will not endure so much pain as to feel their own condition, and have their sores so faithfully searched as is necessary to a cure: this afflicting of the soul, their souls abhor.

But when converting grace hath changed their hearts, O how the case is altered with them! Then godly sorrow is even as it were, natural to them; and they that could not en-

duce it, do now even cherish and indulge it. It is a voluntary sorrow; they mourn and would mourn like him that cried out, "Labour not to comfort me<sup>a</sup>;" that is, till God will comfort me. As a sore that is not ripe will not break nor run, and that which is not suppurable is oft incurable, but when it is brought to suppuration and ripeness, then it will even break of itself, and run without any more ado: so is it with the impenitent soul and the penitent; till repentance comes, the soul is not ripe; ministers are every day applying to it all the mollifying, dissolving remedies they can devise, to bring it to suppuration, but all will not do; their hearts will not break, not a tear of unfeigned repentance will come forth; they hide their sin, and scorn to make a penitent confession. But Oh! when grace hath done the work, and softened the heart, and ripened the sore, then it will come out of its own accord. I would not have you take this upon my bare word, but see whether the Scripture say not so before me, Acts ii. 37. They were once a stubborn generation of sinners that the apostles had there to deal withal, that durst have their hands in the blood of Christ himself; but when they were once converted, "they were pricked at the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" This did imply a confession of their sin: q. d. We confess ourselves guilty, and we find our souls in a miserable case under the wrath and curse of God: O give us your advice what we shall do. These were three thousand people at once that were brought to this conviction and confession. See how freely all comes out, when the heart is once pricked by the Word and Spirit! The like you know was the case of Saul at his conversion, Acts ix. 5, 6. as stout a hearted sinner before as another; but when God overpowered him by converting grace, then he calls out with trembling and astonishment, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And when he relateth his own life and manner of conversion, Acts xxii. 4, 5. how freely doth he confess his former persecution! And again, in Acts xxvi. 10, 11. confessing that he was a persecutor, "yea, and punished Christians in the synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; yea, was mad, yea, exceedingly mad against

<sup>a</sup> Isa. xxii. 4.

them." The like doth he confess, Tit. iii. 3. Acts xvi. the apostles met with a sturdy jailor that put them in the inner prison, and their feet fast in the stocks; but when an earthquake opened the doors and set them free, and a heart-quake brought him in, and laid him at their feet, and grace took the opportunity to do its work, then he crieth out with trembling, ver. 30. "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" David tells you his own experience, Psal. xxxii. 5, 6. "I acknowledged my sins unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid: I said, I will confess my transgression unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin: for this shall every one that is godly, pray unto thee in a time when thou mayst be found." And after his grievous fall, the fifty-first Psalm will shew you his confession. So Acts xix. 18. "Many confessed and shewed their deeds, and brought their books and burned them before all men." These were such as were reputed wise and learned before; but when grace had changed them, they openly confess that all was folly. Many more such examples we have, and precepts where God requireth it; Ezra x. 1. Neh. ix. 2, 3. Lev. v. 5. xvi. 21. xxvi. 40. Numb. v. 7. And indeed, pardon itself is offered on these terms, 1 John i. 9. "If we confess, he is faithful and just to forgive." Prov. xxviii. 13. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth them and forsaketh them, shall have mercy." James v. 16. "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another." And indeed in the first times, no man was baptized that did not confess his sins openly before, and renounce them; even John himself caused the Jews to confess their sins before he would baptize them; Matt. iii. 6. Mark i. 5. So in Jer. iii. 12, 13. "Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord; and I will not keep mine anger for ever; only confess thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord, &c. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married to you, &c." You see here that conversion hath ever confession accompanying it. He that turneth, must and will confess, as the repenting church, Jer. xiv. 20. "We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers; for we have sinned against thee: do not abhor us



for thy name's sake." And Hos. v. 15. it was the Lord's threatening against them, "I will go and return unto my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face; in their afflictions they will seek me early." So that it is most evident that conversion openeth the heart and mouth to confess, even to God or man, or both, according as the case requireth: not but that a Judas will do it at last in horror, and cry out, "I have sinned in betraying the innocent blood:" but this is forced by horror, and not by a gracious change. Many a thief will confess their sin at the gallows, that are not converted; but when conversion comes, the very mind being changed, is set against the sin, and therefore they long to cast it up. Hiding tendeth to keeping, confession tendeth to parting with sin: therefore he that is penitent doth not hide it, so far as he hath any call to confess it. O sirs, that the Lord would bring this to the hearts of some of you that most need it: one may hear by your speeches that conversion is far from your hearts. How many among us are there that have little cause to justify themselves, and yet we cannot bring them to any confession, but what is general and common with all, That we are sinners! But for any hateful and disgraceful sin, they excuse it, and hide it; and have nothing but good almost to say of themselves. You shall not hear one sad complaint almost that they will make against themselves. If you have a froward wife, you will complain of that; if disobedient children, if careless or stubborn servants, you will complain of them. If you have unkind friends or neighbours, you will complain of them; but of yourselves, where you have greatest reason to complain, we can scarce hear a word. If any do you wrong, you are still harping upon it, and making the worst of it; but for all the wrong that you have done to God and your own souls, you can lightly pass it over, and make little of it: and who heareth you half so oft complain of yourselves as others? What say you, is it not thus with many among us? You know not how sad a mark this is. I tell you, if ever converting grace come to your hearts, it will make you pour out complaints against yourselves; it will make you cry with David, "I have done foolishly<sup>b</sup>:" and with Paul, "I was foolish, disobe-

<sup>b</sup> 2 Sam. xxiv. 10.

dient, I was mad, yea, exceedingly mad<sup>c</sup>: ”and, “ O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me<sup>d</sup>? ” Mark the unconverted man in his talk, and you shall hear him, if not as the Pharisee, saying, “ I am not like other men; ” yet at least saying nothing against himself, but nibbling at the good names of others, and making the devil more servants than indeed he hath, and God fewer, by their venturous censures ; they have the hypocrite’s eye that was not made to see itself, that is good for little, but to spy moles in others’ eyes ; but the beam in their own they cannot see. The infirmities of those that fear God they can talk of ; but a graceless heart and a worldly, fleshly life of their own doth little trouble them. But when converting grace comes, you may hear by their very talk, that the case is changed ; they have nobody then to talk against, so much as themselves ; their censures against themselves do seem the most uncharitable ; their talk is most of the sins of their own hearts and lives : and blame them not, for these are nearest them, and most concern them : the mote in their own eye doth most grieve them, and till they have wiped out that, they have less mind to look into the eyes of others. In a word, whosoever is justified of God, and freed from condemnation, is a judger and condemner of himself ; 1 Cor. xi. 31. But they that lie under the condemnation of God, are commonly self-justifiers ; Luke xvi. 15.

(2.) Another means that converting grace doth turn the heart to, is, earnest prayer to God. A man unconverted is a stranger to true prayer ; either he doth nothing in his duty, or that which is next to nothing : commonly they will not be brought so much as to the outside and form of the duty ; but if they be, that is all ; till some affliction or conviction come and awaken them to a little more for a time : but they never fall to this work to the purpose, till saving grace do truly change them : a carnal heart feeleth no such need of God or mercy, as to drive him to beg for it from day to day. He feels himself well enough, and therefore saith with them in Job xxi. 15. “ What is the Almighty that we should serve him ? and what profit should we have if we pray unto him ? ” as Mal. iii. 14. they scarce think it worth their labour. It may be for fear of perishing with the ungodly, and

<sup>c</sup> Acts xxvi. 11. Tit. iii. 3.

<sup>d</sup> Rom. vii. 24.

from some general conviction of conscience, they may use some formal, cold expressions, or perhaps take up the outside of this duty : but it is not prayer, without the desires of the soul which carry out a man to seek for mercy and relief to God : unconverted men are either dumb to this holy duty, or their hearts are dumb while their tongues are speaking : either they have nothing to say to God ; or nothing but some words that they get by rote, and utter without the feeling of their souls ; or else they have little else but words. Their consciences witness, and God himself is a witness, that they do not in secret beg earnestly for his mercy : they do not heartily call to him for pardoning grace and sanctifying grace : with their families they do not earnestly beg of God the same mercy, as a people that desire that he should dwell among them. For where there is no true feeling of sin and misery, and desire after grace, there can be no hearty prayers to God : what need you any further mark of a graceless soul, than that they are prayerless.

But converting grace doth open the heart, and let in the Holy Ghost, which is a Spirit of supplication<sup>e</sup> ; and this Spirit doth help their infirmities, and whereas, of themselves, “ they know not what to pray for as they ought, he maketh request for them with groans that are unutterable<sup>f</sup>.” As the new-born infant, or any living creature, will quickly shew whether it be alive, by making towards the parent or dam for its nourishment ; so will the new-born Christian. It is not unlikely that the apostle referreth to this : “ We have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father.” As the child doth first learn to cry dad or mam ; so doth the Christian first learn to make out to God as a Father, and by prayer to seek to him for relief ; and for certain, as the Spirit of Christ is a Spirit of prayer, so if any man “ have not this Spirit, he is none of his<sup>g</sup>.” The evidence that God giveth Ananias of Saul’s conversion, was this, “ Behold he prayeth<sup>h</sup>.” It was the proof of Cornelius’s grace, that “ he prayed to God always<sup>i</sup>.” And the angel takes the time of his prayer, to appear to him ; and Peter that must be sent unto him, is found at prayer<sup>k</sup>. The new

<sup>e</sup> Zech. xii. 10.<sup>f</sup> Rom. viii. 26, 27.<sup>g</sup> Rom. viii. 15. 9.<sup>h</sup> Acts ix. 11.<sup>i</sup> Acts x. 2.<sup>k</sup> Acts x. 9.



converted disciples “ continued in prayer<sup>l</sup>.” It is no small part of a Christian’s life to “ continue instant in prayer, and watch in the same<sup>m</sup>.” It were easy to prove this by multitudes of Scripture texts : he that hath not this breath of prayer, is either a dead man, or in a dangerous swoon. As the poor child when any thing hurteth it, or affrighteth it, runs to the mother or father for help ; so doth the poor Christian to Christ.—He may go to ministers, and go to other Christians (as Cornelius to Peter, because Christ sendeth him, and so under Christ); but it is Christ that he goeth directly to, and that he is most with. He hath a very praying spirit within him, contrary to that dumb spirit that possesseth the ungodly : so that he must needs go to God when any thing aileth him, and he will not be held back. His soul would be disconsolate, and as David in the wilderness, Psal. xlii. if he were kept from God : he would be overwhelmed with his troubles if he might not go ease his mind with God : some ease he may get from ministers and friends, but Oh ! if he had not more from God, his case were very sad : he is in prayer as Jeremiah in preaching ; “ The word was a consuming fire shut up in his bones, he was weary of forbearing and could not stay<sup>n</sup>.” So are his sins and his necessities like a consuming fire shut up in his heart ; he is weary with forbearing, he cannot hold them, to God he must go, as David, while he held his tongue, his sorrow was stirred, his heart was hot within him, the fire burned till he spake to God : “ While I kept silence my bones waxed old<sup>o</sup>.” You may better keep the converted Christians from food, or raiment, or home, or friends, than keep them from God : they had rather be without a shop to work in, a house to dwell in, a bed to lie in, than a place to pray in. But the best is, that God hath sanctified every place to him, and commanded him every where to lift up pure hands<sup>p</sup>. His Lord and Saviour hath left him his example, who was sometimes in a wilderness, and sometimes in a garden, and sometimes in other solitary places, purposely for prayer, and so accustomed to one, that Judas knew of it<sup>q</sup>. He that was perfect would shew us his de-

<sup>l</sup> Acts ii. 42.<sup>m</sup> Rom. xii. 2. Col. iv. 2. Ephes. vi. 18.<sup>n</sup> Jer. xx. 8, 9.<sup>o</sup> Psal. xxxix. 2, 3. xxxii. 3.<sup>p</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 8.<sup>q</sup> Mark xiv. 23. xvi. 36. vi. 46. xiv. 32. Luke xxii. 41, 44.

pendance on the infinite Godhead, by giving us an example of constancy in this duty: so that we find him even all night in prayer to God<sup>r</sup>. And all his disciples do learn this lesson of him, and imitate him in their measure, in this holy work. If we ask for other examples, we may find Cornelius and Daniel at it in their families<sup>s</sup>, Peter at it in the house top<sup>t</sup>; Paul and Silas at midnight are at it in the inner prison in the stocks<sup>u</sup>. From every place can the prayers of the godly have access to heaven. For God is every where present, and therefore though the places of public assemblies be in a special sort the house of prayer<sup>x</sup>; yet doth he not confine his prayer to that house. The very soul of a Christian is habituated to prayer, and therefore he doth it as it were continually<sup>y</sup>: and in every thing he maketh known his wants by it to God<sup>z</sup>. So that he is seldom so deep asleep in any lapse through security but that more or less he breathes his breath of grace in holy prayer. If he want wisdom, he asketh it of God, for he knoweth that he giveth liberally, and upbraideth not<sup>a</sup>. If he want the Spirit itself in a further measure, he goes to God that hath promised to give it to them that ask it<sup>b</sup>. If he want forgiveness of sin, deliverance from any evil or temptation, it is the matter of his daily prayer, yea, so is his very daily bread, his health and life, and all the comforts of it: for he knoweth that all things are sanctified by the word and prayer<sup>c</sup>. If he be afflicted, he prayeth; and if in sickness, he desireth the elders of the church to pray with him<sup>d</sup>: for he knoweth that the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much<sup>e</sup>. If the servants of Christ be in troubles, it is prayers without ceasing that is the means of their relief. Even besides secret prayers and church prayers upon any such occasion of their own and others; if a few Christians can get together to prayer, it is more pleasant to them, than to the drunkard or voluptuous, when they can get together for sports or wickedness. When Peter was in prison, many were got together in a house to prayer, when he came and knocked at the door, when the angel had set him free<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>r</sup> Luke vi. 12.<sup>s</sup> Acts x. Dan. vi.<sup>t</sup> Acts x. 9.<sup>u</sup> Acts xvi. 25.<sup>x</sup> Matt. xxi. 13.<sup>y</sup> 1 Thess. v. 17.<sup>z</sup> Phil. iv. 6.<sup>a</sup> James i. 5.<sup>b</sup> Luke xi. 13.<sup>c</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 5.<sup>d</sup> James v. 13, 14. 16.<sup>e</sup> James v. 15. 17.<sup>f</sup> Acts xii. 12.

In a word, the true convert beginneth his new life in prayer ; he continueth it in prayer habitual or actual ; sometimes by the secret motions of the heart, and sometimes by the expression also of his mouth ; and he endeth it, as to this world, most commonly in prayers : as the Lord Jesus himself, as his blessed martyr Stephen did, committing their spirits to God at the closing of their eyes ; and the saints do commonly follow them in that course : so by the help of these blessed gales we are carried through the waves and troubles of this world, and by this we land at the last in glory. Never think therefore to find a prayerless convert, any more than to find a breathless living man. O ! the poor Christian feeleth that he cannot live without prayer, because he cannot live without God. He cannot be without it one day ; he cannot be at home without it, or abroad without it ; he cannot travel or return home without it ; he cannot labour without it in the shop or in the field ; but when he wants a place to bow his knee in, he hath yet an opportunity to bow his soul ; and if company or business do shut his mouth, yet it must be business indeed that quite taketh off his heart ; for his eyes are on God, as the eye of the servant on the hand of his master, saith David <sup>g</sup>. Why may I not say, as the eye of our dogs, when they wait on us at our tables, is towards us for every bit they have ; so the eye and dependance of the Christian for soul and for body, is upon God : and many a secret ejaculation doth he send up, and many a groan doth pass his heart, that those that even stand by him are unacquainted with. As a beggar is known by his needy begging tone, so is he known by his begging of God ; “The poor useth entreaties <sup>h</sup>,” or speaketh supplication ; you may know them by it ; they make a trade of it ; they live by begging ; they will have no nay : such an one is the Christian, that even liveth by begging as his very trade : as one that must always pray, and not be weary or wax faint<sup>i</sup>. So that this is the second means that converting grace doth turn men’s hearts to.

(3.) The third means, subordinate to Christ and the Spirit, which converting grace doth turn the heart to, is, the Word of God, whether heard, or read, or preached, or any way fitly made known. The Word is the very seed that

<sup>g</sup> Psal. cxxiii. 2.

<sup>h</sup> Prov. xviii. 23.

<sup>i</sup> Luke xviii. 1.



doth beget him to this life, the immortal seed of God, which always must remain in him<sup>k</sup>. Of this incorruptible seed is he new born<sup>l</sup>. And therefore it cannot be but he must love it, and desire it. The Scripture to a carnal man is as a common book : many things in it seem to be unlikely, and many things even next to foolishness, because he hath not the Spirit to discern them. To all the ungodly it is as a sealed book ; though some of them know the grammatical and logical sense, none of them taste the spiritual sweetness, nor partake of the life that it begets in the soul. Therefore we find the learned Papists so many of them making a jest of Scripture, even while they confess it to be the Word of God. Some of them daring to accuse the matter, and some the style, and many the words and manner of expression, as if it were obscure, or unfit, or insufficient to its proper use : a carnal man can easily spare it ; a chapter in the Bible to him is but as a common story. Many an one of them can delight to read a romance, or a book of fables and fictions, like “ The Knight of the Sun,” “ The Seven Champions,” or “ Palmarine,” or “ Guy of Warwick,” or such like wicked devices of men’s brains that are made to rob God of men’s hearts, and to rob themselves of their time and wit ; than to read over the sacred story, and the holy precepts of Christ, and the spiritual doctrine of faith and salvation. We may see the difference between men’s dispositions towards God’s Word in the Papists and poor Protestants, in the time and place of persecution. The Protestants would make much of one leaf of the Bible ; they would get together to hear a chapter read, as to a feast, when they knew their lives were endangered by it. The Papists used all their power to suppress it, to hinder the promulgation of it, and keep the people from the knowledge of it, and burned them at a stake for the using of it. Their inquisition in Spain and Italy inquire after it, as if it were some book of treason or witchcraft ; when the poor Christians whose hearts are touched with it, do hide it and keep it, as the chiefest jewel in the world. Luther would not take a world for one leaf of the Bible ; his adversaries would have been glad if they could have banished it out of the world. In the primitive church the heathen persecutors did

<sup>k</sup> Luke viii. 11.    <sup>l</sup> 1 John iii. 9.<sup>l</sup> 1 Pet. i. 23.

first seek after the Christian Bibles and other good books, that they might burn them. And if the ministers would deliver them all the books, sometimes they would spare their lives; but the poor Christians would be torn in pieces and suffer any kind of death before they would deliver them one of those books to be burnt. And if any through fear had yielded to deliver them, they were ever after looked upon by the other Christians, as if they were apostates and deniers of Christ, and were commonly called by the name of Traditors, and the very posterity of such was in disgrace after them. In so much that the schism of the Donatists sprung from an excessive zeal on this occasion; because a bishop was but ordained by one that had been a son of a Traditor of the Bible, they separated from him, and from all the church that held communion with him, for his sake. So that you may see what thoughts the servants of Christ have ever had of the Holy Scriptures, and how contrary to these are the men of the world.

And we cannot blame them, for they know that it was by this word that God did first quicken them; by this he convinced them of sin and misery; by this he revealed to them Christ and glory. In this is contained the covenant of grace, the charter for salvation, and that title to all the mercies of this life and that which is to come. Here are the laws of heaven by which they must live, and by which they must all be judged. Here are those promises which first revived their distressed souls; the first cordials that did refresh their fainting spirits: the first news of pardon and glad tidings of salvation that ever they had was from hence. They know it is a book inspired from heaven by the Spirit of God, containing the discovery of the will of God; and the highest mysteries, which flesh and blood cannot reveal; and that they are matters also of everlasting consequence, to which all the matters in this world are as nothing, and not worthy the naming or once remembering. And do you blame a poor Christian for being in love with this blessed book? Especially when he knoweth these things not by bare hear-say only, but by many a sweet experience in his soul; many a sweet draught hath he here drank in his extremity; and many a feast hath his soul here had, if he be a Christian of long standing and experience. But, however,

this was the means of his conversion, and the very instrument of the Spirit for raising him from the dead ; and as the Christian is so in love with the book of God, so is he with the doctrine of it, wherever he finds it. Any other book that is written to explain and apply this, is savory to him ; especially the public preaching of this word, which is most eminently the standing ordinance of God for man's conversion and edification. The same sermons that would have made him sleep, or made his head ache before his conversion, do now awaken him, and make his heart ache for his former folly ; and yet he loveth them, though they trouble and grieve him, for he loveth that kind of trouble and grief which they beget. Oh how sweet is that word to his soul, which heretofore he was wont to loathe or quarrel at ! He could live with David in the temple, even day and night : other men can scarce be drawn to it, but for customs or by-respects, but it would be a death to him to be kept away. If there were a famine in the land of the word of God, he would wander from sea to sea before he would be without it<sup>m</sup>. It is as natural, according to this new nature, for a true convert to seek after the word of God, as for the infant to make to the breast<sup>n</sup>. As new-born babes, they desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may live and grow thereby ; they receive with meekness the engrafted word : τὸν λόγον ἐμφυτον the word which is innaturalized to them, and connatural with them : for it is it that is able to save their souls ; James i. 21. Able to do its own part thereto. Never did you know that Christian that could live without this word, any more than a man can live without meat. I told you the language of Job, David, and Jeremiah before. O how certainly do the careless neglecters and despisers of this word discover, that yet they are unconverted souls, that taste no more sweetness in it than in a chip ; that will rather make it a matter of derision, when they see people read and hear so diligently, and talk so much of the word of God : and do in their hearts almost as one of the Papist rebels in Ireland did with his feet, even stamp the Bible in the dirt, and curse it, and said, " This is it that hath bred all this, and set us together by the ears." Little better thoughts have many secret infidels of it in their hearts. But

<sup>m</sup> Amos viii. 12.<sup>n</sup> 1 Pet. i. 2.



here the Christian hath grounded his hopes ; here hath he built and bottomed his soul ; and here will he live and die. This then is another part of the work of conversion, it turneth men's hearts to the word of God, and maketh them value it as their necessary food.

(4.) The fourth means of salvation which conversion turneth the heart of a man to, is the Communion of the Saints. Before conversion, the nature, and sometimes the very name of a saint is loathsome to them, though God hath told us, that without holiness none shall see him<sup>o</sup>. And that all his people are called and sanctified ; and that none but they shall be glorified, yet how commonly do we hear men make a mock at the very name of saints. These are the saints, say they, these are the holy brethren. When the blood of Christ is shed to sanctify men, when the Spirit of grace is sent from heaven to sanctify men, and hath made it his office, when all that God doth by his word and ordinances is to sanctify men. When all true Christians are sanctified men, or saints, and the church itself is a company of saints ; and when sanctification is nothing else but our devotedness to God that made and redeemed us. Yet, dare these impious wretches open their mouths against sanctity, coming near to the scorning of God himself, and to reproaching the word and the will of God ! Yea, and to some kind of blaspheming the Holy Ghost. It is natural to a wicked man to hate a saint<sup>p</sup>. An enmity is put between them. And the first two men that were born into the world did manifest that enmity, for Cain killed his brother Abel, because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous<sup>q</sup>. And Christ himself telleth his disciples, that because they are not of the world, but he hath chosen them out of the world, therefore the world hateth them ; but if they were of the world, the world would love his own<sup>r</sup>. Yea, on this very account, it first hated Christ himself<sup>s</sup>. And therefore no wonder if the communion of the saints be abhorred, or not delighted in by the ungodly, even while they make it an article of their creed. But when once the soul is truly converted, there is a likeness to God and his saints put upon them, and a natural love to them implanted

<sup>o</sup> Heb. xii. 14.

<sup>p</sup> Gen. iii. 15.

<sup>q</sup> 1 John iii. 12. Heb. xi. 4.

<sup>r</sup> John xv. 19.

<sup>s</sup> John xv. 8.

in their hearts, and thereupon a strong inclination to have communion with them in the worship of God, and the way to heaven; as many drops of water will gather into one, or many streams will run into one river, or many small flames, if you bring them near, will make all into one, and every thing is inclined as it were to incorporate with its like, so is it with the truly sanctified soul. The same means will not serve their turns, if they have it not in communion<sup>t</sup>. The multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul, and they distributed to one another, as every one had need, and charity made that common which law had made proper<sup>u</sup>. They continued stedfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and breaking of bread and prayer; and they that believed were together, and had all things common, (that is, by charity, as I said before) and they continued daily with one accord in the temple, breaking bread from house to house. Certainly, there is in all the children of God, such a love to their brethren, that they love their company, especially in the holy worship of him that redeemed them. False hearted Christians, that have but the name, may have the hearts of heathens, and do as they did, who were unacquainted with Christian love, but so will not the true. Hence it is, that the Christians in all ages have so valued the sacrament, which hath been still called the Communion of the church, or of saints; because there they all join together to feed upon one Christ, and taste of the supper of the Lord, as the fellow heirs of his glory. And as many corns made one loaf of bread, so are they, as the apostle speaks, one bread and one body. For the bread which they break, it is the communion of the body of Christ, and the cup which they drink, is the communion of his blood<sup>x</sup>. And hence it is, that it hath ever been so heavy a punishment in the eyes of all Christians to be excommunicate, and shut out of the fellowship of the church, (though there are also other reasons greater than this). So that the poor Christians, if they had fallen into any sin that deserved excommunication, they would have stood with tears at the church doors, month after month, entreating the prayers of the church that they might be pardoned, and be fit to be taken in again; and this even when Chris-

<sup>t</sup> Acts iv. 32.<sup>u</sup> Acts ii. 43.<sup>x</sup> 1 Cor. x. 16.

tianity was so persecuted, that it was a matter of danger to a man's life to be a Christian, so precious then was the communion of saints. Every Lord's day did they administer the Lord's supper, that they might be frequent in that part of communion. And, therefore, they highly esteemed the Lord's days, because they were the days of the churches' holy communion. Do not marvel then, if any true converted soul have a closing, uniting, combining, disposition; and if they love to be together in the holy worship and service of God; and if they are glad when they can get together in the public meeting place, or any other convenient place, to join together, and help each other in the work that is common to all. I know there may be some upright souls live among such as hinder them from that communion which they would have; but their hearts are towards it, and they will have it if they can. I know also, that the heathens and the Papists, and all enemies of the church, have still defamed the communion of Christians, and such as join to seek the Lord. And if any evil fall out among them, they would lay it all on their meeting and communion. But yet this malice of the devil could never break the assembly and communion of the saints. I know also, that many heretics are much addicted to secret combination, and to tie together in their way; but that is natural for men to love their like in evil; so drunkards can flock together to an alehouse; but it is not so natural to delight in good; other men's communion in evil, doth not disgrace, but commend our communion in the fear of God. Satan hath his legions that can agree in one man; but they are not such as the legions that attended upon Christ. What, must Christ have no school or army, because satan hath one? Must we dissipate, because the wicked always associate? There are means sufficient left us to discern the communion of the church of Christ from all ungodly and heretical combinations whatsoever. Though there be some stings in the church of Christ among the bees, yet there is more honey. The meetings of heretics are like the nests of wasps, they are all sting and no honey. Saith Tertullian, "*Vespæ habent favos, et Marcionitæ ecclesias*:"—"Wasps have combs too, and heretics make churches." The combs of the bees and of the wasps may be very like to look upon,



but the honey is not like, nor the sting altogether. It is not to feed on the doctrine of Christ, and live to him, that heretics do combine; but it is to divide the church, and to shew their error and pride, and to sting and despise others. So that their meetings are nothing like the meeting of the church in many regards. I beseech you now beloved hearers, try how your hearts are affected to the matter in hand. If you are true converts, your very hearts are among the saints: it doth you good especially to join with them in public, and especially in the two duties of praising God, and receiving the sacraments, which are the most proper to the church. And also it will do you good to have communion with them in private, in prayer, in conference, in any holy work. You are where you would be, when you are thus employed. You do not do like the hypocritical world, to say, "I believe the communion of saints," and at the same time either hate and scorn, or at least neglect and set light by the communion of saints. It is not to every wicked man that the promise is made, "Where two or three are met together in Christ's name, there is he in the midst of them." And it is not for nothing, that the saints delight in this communion. For as here is most of God's blessing, and most help from one another, so when they are nearest to one another, they are all nearest to Christ. And their closure and communion is a foretaste of their communion in glory: for their happiness lieth in their being one with Christ and among themselves<sup>y</sup>: and Christ died of purpose to "gather into one the children of God, that are scattered throughout the world<sup>z</sup>:" and it is God's design in the work of redemption to "gather together in one all things in Christ<sup>a</sup>." And as he therefore "gives his prophets, apostles, and ministers to the church, for the perfection of the saints, and edifying the body, till it be all come in the unity of the faith to a perfect man, that we may grow up in him, who is the Head in all things from whom the body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, to the edifying of itself in love<sup>b</sup>." So also at the day of judgment shall the "angels gather the elect together from the

<sup>y</sup> John xvii. 21.

<sup>a</sup> Ephes. i. 10.

<sup>z</sup> John xi. 52.

<sup>b</sup> Eph. iv. 11—16.

four winds<sup>c</sup>,” and they shall be one in Christ for ever<sup>d</sup>. Great reason therefore have the saints to make out after more of that, which their perfection doth so much consist in. Other men may have some delight in the company and assembly of Christians for bye-respects; but to love the communion of the saints, as such, and delight in them as the body of Christ employed in his praises, this is the proper disposition of a saint. And this is another thing that conversion doth turn their hearts unto.

4. Having spoken of the third part of the Conversion of the Heart, which consisteth in the right choice of the means to salvation; I proceed to the fourth, which consisteth in the thorough resolving of the yet wavering and unsettled soul. I make not this a part in itself different from all that are beforementioned, but the very life and perfection of them, especially of the two last. Some kind of willingness and unsound consent there may be in the half-converted, and many times it is long after the beginning of this change before it reach to a sound resolution; but it is never a saving work of special grace indeed, and proper to the saints till then. Men may have many convictions, and be brought to engage themselves in covenant to God, and yet for want of this true resolution, their hearts may not be right with God, nor they be stedfast in his covenant<sup>e</sup>. We are suitors for Christ to a backward and obstinate generation of men; we are long persuading them before they will yield, and when they seem to yield, they are long in the beginning, deliberating and wavering before they will resolve. Sometimes God turneth the heart more suddenly at a sermon; but ordinarily, for aught I can find, men stick long under conviction and half purposes, before they are thus converted. When they see that all is not well with them, and that they are not in a safe condition to appear before God at judgment, in that they have not taken the right course that Christian wisdom required them to take, they feel then within them many persuadings of the Spirit of God, and their conscience reasoning the case with them, and saying, ‘ This life will not serve thy turn long, if death find thee in this condition, thou art an undone man: away then with thy negligence and idle company and courses, and set thyself to seek after

<sup>c</sup> Matt. xxiv. 31.<sup>d</sup> John xvii. 21.<sup>e</sup> Psal. lxxviii. 37.

Christ before it be too late;’ and under these persuasions the mind is sometimes purposed to do it. But these purposes are either for the time to come, that hereafter they will be new men; or else they are but half purposes, that reach not to a resolution: and therefore if at present they make some kind of change, it is but by the halves; and they usually turn back again: this is the case of the best men ordinarily before conversion.

But when conversion comes, it turns over the mind unfeignedly to God; it brings the soul beyond its former waverings; it shews men that there is no other remedy, the thing is of necessity, and that all is but vanity that can be said against it; and no good reason can be given to take any wise man off from the work of repentance and a heavenly life, and therefore he is resolved that this shall be his way. He hath considered and found for certain that there is no true felicity but in the favour of God; and that his love and promised glory are everlasting, and all things else are vain and transitory; and therefore he is resolved that God should be his portion, and nothing but God; heaven shall be the end of his desire and labour, and nothing but heaven. He hath also considered that there is no pardon of sin, but by the blood of Christ, and no hope of salvation, but by cleaving to him, and yielding to his renewing Spirit; and therefore he is now resolved that Christ shall have his heart, and his Spirit shall do its work, and that the word of God hereafter shall be his rule. He is now determined to know nothing but Christ crucified<sup>f</sup>. Before he was like a man that was weighing somewhat in the scales, and the other end was the heavier, or the scales stood as it were even: but now the Holy Ghost hath brought in those arguments, and set them home on the conscience, with that life that hath turned the scales. Before he was like a man that had lost his way, and standeth still, considering whether he shall turn back or not, or whether he shall go this way or that; but now he is resolved, and he stands no longer considering, but turns without any more ado. And this resolution is not rash or ungrounded, but having considered what can be said for God and for the world, for sin and for repentance; and considering what he may meet with in the

<sup>f</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 2.



way to heaven, he resolveth whatever it cost him, repent he will, return he will, for saved he must be. Though he meet with hard dealing from the world, there is no remedy, he will go through it; though he may suffer much in the flesh, yet that shall not take him off; though he knows he must leave his former pleasure and wicked company, and live that life that the flesh doth abhor, yet all this shall not take him off. O what a pleading and reasoning there is commonly between the flesh and the Spirit, before the heart will be thus resolved. As it was with Carraciolus, the marquis of Vicum, when his conscience bid him leave his land, and friends, and all for Christ, to forsake Popery, and betake himself to these countries, where he might enjoy the Gospel; his house and lands then came in his eyes; 'What must I leave all these for mere conscience, and live I know not how?' His wife hangs upon him, his children with tears do cry after him, 'O father, leave us not!' And many a sob and sigh it costs his heart before he could resolve to get away: and as it was with many of the martyrs when they were to die for Christ and for his truth; wife, and children, and friends follow them to the fire, crying out, 'O turn, turn, and do not undo yourselves and us;' so that they had almost as much ado to overcome that temptation, as to bear the flames: so is it with a sinner in the work of conversion; when he looks to Christ and everlasting glory, and considereth withal that these cannot be obtained without the loss of earthly, sinful pleasure; and when he thinketh of his old merry company and course, his ease and fleshly pleasure that he must leave; when he thinks of the strangeness of the way that he must now turn to, and how unacquainted he is with it, and how many bitter scorns, and worse, he is like to meet with, and how much care and pains it must cost him to be saved; this keepeth him sometimes at a stand, and breedeth in him many troublous thoughts, so that he scarce knows which way to turn him, or what to do. If he repent and turn to God, he must deny his flesh, and forsake all this world, and for aught he knows, have scarce any more of that kind of pleasure that he lived upon before; and if he do not this, he must forsake God, and all hope of everlasting glory, and give up himself to eternal misery. This seemeth a very sad straight to one at the first; because he yet hath had no ex-

perience of the joy of the Holy Ghost, and the higher comforts of a Christian life, nor of the help which God will afford him in his way : and therefore we cannot marvel if many a poor soul do here stick in the birth ; and if it be long before they resolve for God ; and if others turn back and perish for ever ; and grace, and only grace will resolve them ; when Christ opens their eyes effectually and to the purpose, he lets them see, that between heaven and earth, God and the world, grace and sin, there is no comparison. They see then, it is not a matter to doubt of, or to stick at : God must be pleased, but there is no necessity that the world or the flesh be pleased. God's favour must be had, but we may live without the favour of the world ; death and judgment must be provided for, but it is needless to provide for the desires of the flesh : an hundred considerations come in upon his soul, which make him say, Away with all these worldly vanities, and welcome Christ and a holy life. Now he " casteth off that weight that hangeth on him, and that sin that did so easily beset him, that he may run with patience the race that is before him, looking to Jesus the Author and Finisher of his faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despised the shame, and is sat down at the right hand of God <sup>s</sup>." In a word, he is now thoroughly convinced that one thing is necessary, and therefore he hath chosen the better part, which shall not be taken from him <sup>h</sup>. O sirs, you are never truly converted till this resolution of the soul ; whatever good purposes you may have for the time to come, if you be not presently resolved presently to return ; I say, presently without delay, you are not yet truly converted to Christ, though you may verily think that the life of faith and holiness is the best life, and may have some mind to it, and purpose one of these days to return ; nay, though you may have some present purposes that are cold and faint, and come not up to the height of resolution ; and though you make some trial hereafter, and change some of your company and your courses, all this is well, but it will not serve the turn without this resolution. Many a man that is lost for ever, hath had many a good wish and purpose, and made some essay to mend his life, and made some half reformation, and yet, be-

<sup>s</sup> Heb. xii. 1, 2.

<sup>h</sup> Luke x. 42.

ing not resolved for Christ, they have perished. The very principal part of the work of saving grace in the soul doth lie in this resolution. O that the wavering, and the loitering, and the delaying soul would lay this well to heart. O that they understood this, who are convinced that they must return and be new men, and yet cannot be brought to present resolution, but linger in their sins, as being loath to come away; as Lot did in Sodom, till God being merciful to him, caused the angel to carry him out. Well this is the next work of converting grace. If ever you be converted, you will be resolved for Christ.

5. The fifth part of the work of Conversion in the heart, consisteth in the change that is made upon the Affections. Though these are not so evident and certain always to try a man's state by; and therefore I would have Christians try especially by the former, yet it is certain that conversion changeth these also; and because they are many, and I have been long in the description of this work already, I will the more briefly run them over.

(1.) The first of the affections that appeareth in this change, are, love and hatred. Before conversion, the heart loveth not spiritual things and ways: there is an opposition to them, and enmity against them<sup>i</sup>. It loveth not inward holiness, nor a holy life; it loveth not the people that are holy; nay, it loveth not God himself as he is just and holy; yea, it hath an inward loathing of him, and of his image and way; though yet it be so deceitful as perhaps not to know thus much by itself. But on the contrary, it loveth fleshly pleasure, and earthly profit, and vain-glory, and ease, and honour of the world; for it only savoureth these kind of things<sup>k</sup>. But conversion turneth a man's love and hatred, and maketh him love the holy God, and those holy people and ways that he could not heartily love before, and it maketh him loathe those sins, that before he loved; that this is so, in all that are converted, is evident from many texts of Scripture. "He that loveth father or mother<sup>l</sup>, &c." "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night<sup>m</sup>." "In his eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that

<sup>i</sup> Rom. viii. 5. 7.

<sup>k</sup> Rom. viii. 7.

<sup>l</sup> Matt. x. 37.

<sup>m</sup> Psal. i. 2, 3.



fear the Lord <sup>n</sup>.” “ By this we may know that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren; he that loveth not his brother abideth in death <sup>o</sup>.” They hated the light before, because it was against their deeds, but now they love it, and come to it <sup>p</sup>. The very evil actions that they do, they now hate <sup>q</sup>. Yea, they hate even the garments spotted of the flesh. All that beareth the mark of a fleshly sensual course <sup>r</sup>. Sirs, if you be truly converted, this change will be upon your affections.

(2.) The second pair of affections that shew themselves in this change, are, desire and aversion. These are so near akin to love and hatred, that I need to say the less of them. The unconverted man's desires are after the fleshly pleasures which he loveth; of these they think they can never have enough, but cry as the horse-leech, give, give. When do you hear the covetous man say he hath enough? or the ambitious man say, I would be no higher? or the sensual man say, my appetite and lust are now satisfied, I would have no more? Their very life is a thirsting after provision for the flesh <sup>s</sup>; and the fulfilling its desires <sup>t</sup>. And sometimes God giveth them much of that they do desire for a time, but it is in judgment, and a curse to them through their sin <sup>u</sup>. But as for God and Christ, and the Spirit, and holiness, to these they have no appetite, but naturally loathe them, and at the best have but cold and heartless wishes after them. Hence it is, that they refuse so many motions for their own good. Move them to spiritual things, and there is somewhat within them that is against the motion, so that they will not hear us, or be persuaded by us. O how backward is an unconverted soul to spiritual good! They will go no further than they are drawn, and they will not be drawn to give up themselves to it. Hence it is, that our ministerial labours are so much lost. We persuade sick men to their meat, that have no appetite to it. Nay, whose stomachs rise against it and loathe it. It goeth against their carnal natures, against their former customs, against their ease, and profit, and pleasure, and therefore it will not down with them, they cannot away with it <sup>x</sup>. We

<sup>n</sup> Psal. xv. 4.

<sup>q</sup> Rom. vii. 15.

<sup>r</sup> Eph. ii. 3.

<sup>o</sup> 1 John iii. 14.

<sup>p</sup> Judè 23.

<sup>q</sup> Psal. lxxviii. 29.

<sup>p</sup> John iii. 19, 20.

<sup>s</sup> Rom. xiii. 12.

<sup>x</sup> Job. xxi. 14.

heave a stone that will stir no further than main force doth move it. O had they but desire after Christ and grace, as they have after worldly, fleshly vanity, how happy might they be.

But when converting grace comes, it changeth their desire. God calls to them then effectually by his word and Spirit. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come and drink of the water of life freely <sup>x</sup>." As if he should say, 'What mean you to desire that which will do so little good, and to lay out your labour for that which will not profit you, and follow my direction, and I will give you that which is worthy your desire.' When God hath once effectually touched the heart with converting grace, it leaves a secret thirsting after him in the soul. As when he called Peter and the other apostles, and said unto them, follow me, they presently left all and followed him. Then they cry out with David, "My soul thirsteth after thee as the thirsty land <sup>y</sup>." "The desire of their soul is to his name, and to the remembrance of him <sup>z</sup>." Now they see that excellency in God's word, and ways, and graces, that all things that may be desired, are not to be compared with it <sup>a</sup>. "They are more to be desired than gold, yea than fine gold <sup>b</sup>." Before they desired many things, and nothing would satisfy them; now give them but one thing and they will be satisfied to the full <sup>c</sup>. Before their desires were only after vanity; but now, so far as they are renewed, they are only after good <sup>d</sup>. And that God that gave them these desires, will fulfil them <sup>e</sup>. He that caused them to hunger and thirst after righteousness, will satisfy them <sup>f</sup>. And he that turned their minds from this world, and gave them to desire after a better country <sup>g</sup>, will give them that promised land which they desire.

(3.) The next affections, whose change is discovered in the work of conversion, are their delight and sorrow. This is the next pair. An unconverted man doth naturally find no pleasure in God or spiritual things: for a fool hath no delight in understanding <sup>h</sup>. It is fleshly lust and pleasure that they desire <sup>i</sup>. And the "pleasure of sin for a season," for

<sup>x</sup> Isa. lv. 1—3.

<sup>y</sup> Psal cxliii. 6. xlii. 2. lxiii. 1.

<sup>z</sup> Isa. xxvi. 8.

<sup>a</sup> Prov. viii. 11.

<sup>b</sup> Psal. xix. 10.

<sup>c</sup> Psal. xxvii. 4. lxxiii. 25.

<sup>d</sup> Prov. xi. 23.

<sup>e</sup> Psal. cxlv. 19.

<sup>f</sup> Matt. v. 6.

<sup>g</sup> Heb. xi. 16.

<sup>h</sup> Prov. xviii. 2.

<sup>i</sup> Tit. iii. 3.

which they part with the highest delight<sup>k</sup>. “They live in pleasures on earth, and fat themselves as for a day of slaughter<sup>l</sup>.” They account it pleasure to riot in the daylight of the gospel, in that day that is given for other kinds of works<sup>m</sup>. They not only do evil, but have “pleasure in them that do it<sup>n</sup>.” These “fools hate knowledge, and scorers delight in scorning<sup>o</sup>.” And if they have any delight in better things through a common work of grace, it is but a superficial fading delight<sup>p</sup>. “A rejoicing in the light for a season<sup>q</sup>.” But no sound well-grounded delight. But when converting grace comes, it giveth a man those new delights which he knew not of before. Then the things that he before saw not, nor well believed, the things which he distasted and loathed, are in his delight. God himself is his delight<sup>r</sup>. The doing of his will is their delight<sup>s</sup>. His law, his word, his statutes, are their delight<sup>t</sup>. On the Lord’s day they delight in him<sup>u</sup>. In the multitude of troubling, perplexing thoughts, his comforts delight their souls<sup>x</sup>. Their delight is in the saints on earth, and those that excel in virtue<sup>y</sup>. It is their meat and drink to draw nigh to God. It doth them good at the heart, when they can but be enlarged towards him, and have more light and life than before they had. These are the new delights of a converted soul. He doth not part with all delight at his conversion; he doth but change a brutish and sensual delight, for such as are fit for a man and a Christian. The wicked think they shall never have a merry day again, if they should be thus changed; but he meets with more truly comfortable days than ever he did before: Nay, he never knew what true comfort was till now. I know every poor Christian hath not that measure of these delights as some have. Some are clouded with darkness, and infirmities, and live much more sadly than others do, but yet the delight which they have in these things, is more than in the things which they before delighted in. It glads them when they can but see a beam of

<sup>k</sup> Heb. xi. 25.<sup>l</sup> James v. 5.<sup>m</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 13.<sup>n</sup> Rom. i. 32.<sup>o</sup> Prov. i. 22.<sup>p</sup> Isa. lviii. 2.<sup>q</sup> John v. 35.<sup>r</sup> Psal. xxxvii. 4.<sup>s</sup> Psal. xl. 8.<sup>t</sup> Psal. i. 2. cxix. 24. lxxix. 16, 35, 47, 70.<sup>u</sup> Isa. lviii. 14.<sup>x</sup> Psal. xciv. 19.<sup>y</sup> Psal. xvi. 3.



heavenly light from the face of God. They have so much as sheweth the change that is made upon their souls.

The like we may say also of the sorrow of the unconverted. It is not the same that it was before. Before it went nearer their hearts to lose any pleasure or commodity in the world, or to be wronged, or suffer any disgrace from men, or to suffer any want in their estates, or any pain in their bodies, than it did to lie under the wrath of God, and live as without him, and his favour in the world. They were truly such as satan fully reported Job to be ; had you but touched them in their estates or bodies, they would have quickly shewed you what was next their hearts. But all the misery of their soul was no great trouble to them. A man would marvel, that knoweth what a miserable state that of sinful nature is, that so many thousands in the world can be void of God's image, strangers to the Spirit, and know no more of Christ but the very name, and yet be no more troubled at it. That they can bear such a weight of unpardoned sins as they do every day, and feel it no more. That they can live under the curse of God's righteous law, and remain in daily danger of damnation, so that if they should die before conversion, they are lost for ever, and yet be no more troubled at it. But alas, they are blind, and see not the case that they are in ; they are dead and stupid, and therefore feel it not. It is the nature of their miserable condition to make them so ; they are more troubled for a worldly trifle, than for all these things of everlasting consequence. But it is far otherwise with the converted soul ; one doubt of the love of God is more grievous to them, than to doubt of their worldly happiness ; the remnant of their mortified sins is heavier on their soul, than the mountains of unmortified sin was to them before ; they send out more groans and cries to God, because of their daily failings and infirmities, than they did before for all their iniquity ; the utter gracelessness of their hearts was then not so grievous to them as the weakness of their graces now. He never before knew what it was to have the least spiritual communion with God, and yet he bare it lightly ; now the miss of it one day and in one duty, is more grievous to him. What need we prove this to you, when every gracious soul doth feel it, and the world about

them may see it, that their sorrows are of another nature than they were before? Were they wont to lie in tears for sin, and mourn for God's absence as now they do? Before they were sorrowful, that they might not come to heaven without such a course as would impoverish them in the world<sup>y</sup>; but now they are sorrowful that they can shake off the world and sin no better, and get ground of their corruptions no faster than they do. *Object.* Perhaps you will say, if conversion bring so much sorrow, is it not better to be without it? *Answ.* No, for it is a willing sorrow, a necessary healing sorrow, that worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of; and not the sorrow of the world that caused death<sup>z</sup>. See there the blessed effects of it at large<sup>a</sup>. It is a sorrow mixed with greater joy; for we are as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing<sup>b</sup>. It is a very short sorrow that will quickly be forgotten; for God hath promised himself to wipe away all tears from our eyes<sup>c</sup>. It is a sorrow of God's own giving, and therefore it cannot choose but be good, for God giveth not evil: it is a sorrow preparing for everlasting joy; and he that hath called us to it, hath foretold us, that we "shall be sorrowful, but our sorrow shall be turned into joy, which none shall take from us. We shall weep and lament, and the world shall rejoice<sup>d</sup>;" but mark the end, who it is that will be sorrowful, or joyful then. "Mark the upright man, and behold the just, for the end of that man is peace<sup>e</sup>." What wise man will refuse so short a sorrow for so long a joy? Who that is well in his wits, will choose rather to die of his sore, than to endure the smart of the lancet to open it? Nay, there is an ingenuity in a converted soul, which makes it in a kind of holy revenge even be willing to taste somewhat of the smart of his own folly. He sees that it was himself that caused it, and brought all this upon himself, and the desert of a thousand times more, and therefore he even chooseth in some measure to afflict his soul, and doth not thrust away sorrow from him, as before he was wont to do.

(4.) The next pair of affections that shew their change, are, hope and despair. Before conversion, the soul of sin-

<sup>y</sup> Matt. xiv. 22. Luke xviii. 23.

<sup>b</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 10.

<sup>c</sup> Psal. xxxvii. 37.

<sup>z</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 10.

<sup>c</sup> Rev. vii. 17. xxi. 4.

<sup>a</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 9, 10.

<sup>d</sup> John xvi. 20.

ners is either borne up on false, ungrounded hopes, which is the common case, or else they drop into desperation. The hopes of an unconverted man, are foolish and contrary to the word of God, and do but shew the delusion of his soul, and tend to his destruction: they are like the hopes of a man that thinketh he is travelling to London, when he is in the way to York, and yet goes on, and hopes he shall come to London for all that, as well as they that go the right way: so do these men commonly hope to come to heaven, while they go in the way to hell. And though God have told them, and passed his word on it, that he that goes in these ways shall not see peace<sup>f</sup>: and hath assured the world, that there is no peace to the wicked<sup>g</sup>: yet still they will hope to find peace in evil ways: these deceiving hopes are the common cause of the damnation of the world; as the Scripture frequently acquainteth us. But when converting grace comes, O! what work it maketh on the soul in this particular! How it battereth down all the false hopes of sinners; and maketh them see that they are all this while deceived! O! it maketh the poor soul even undone in its own apprehension, and shews then that all his hopes were vain that before he trusted in. Then he cries out, 'I had hoped to come to heaven without conversion, but now I see it will not be: I had hoped I was well enough before; and that God would have mercy on me in that condition without any more ado, but now I see I did but deceive myself. I had hoped that I had a saving part in Christ, though I loved the world and followed my sins; but now I see it is not so. I had hoped I might have been saved if I had died in that condition; but now I see that I had certainly been damned.' Now the soul is brought to a kind of despair; not an absolute despair that God will have no mercy on him; no, he never escaped that till now; but a conditional despair, that ever he should come to heaven without conversion; he despaireth of ever being saved in the old condition that he was in: and then comes in another kind of hope than ever he knew before: then the Spirit of grace doth bring him to hope upon grounds that will not deceive him: now he hath a hope that quickeneth him, and that comforteth him: before he had a dull and dead hope to es-

<sup>f</sup> Isa. lix. 8.<sup>g</sup> Isa. lvii. 21. xlviii. 22.



cape damnation; but now he hath a living hope of seeing the face of God for ever. He hath now that hope toward God by which we are saved, even the hope of the resurrection of the dead, and the hope of things not seen<sup>h</sup>. Now he hath a hope which is built on the Scripture, and bred by experience, and which will not make him ashamed<sup>i</sup>: before, as he was without God, so was he without hope<sup>k</sup>; but now he hath that hope which is an anchor of the soul<sup>l</sup>; a hope that he can give a reason of<sup>m</sup>; a hope that purifieth him<sup>n</sup>; even the hope of eternal life, which none have but those that are heirs by faith, and are brought to it by this regeneration<sup>o</sup>. And for this blessed hope at the glorious appearing of the great God our Saviour, doth his faith and patience expect and wait<sup>p</sup>. So that now he hath some reason for his hopes, for he hath the promise of the faithful God to support them. The least hope that a poor troubled soul hath after conversion in the midst of all his fears and doubts, is of more value than all the most confident boastings of the unconverted: for there can be no hope of being saved out of the way that God hath appointed to salvation: and the bolder men are, and the more they hope and boast in a wrong way, the blinder they shew themselves, and the more is their misery; but the godly are safe in an objective hope, even when they want much of the subjective. There is hope, yea, and assurance in itself, when they know it not; and they are safe in that which they do not perceive.

(5.) The next pair of affections that manifest their conversion, are, courage and fear; an unconverted man is bold in sin, but feareth not much the wrath of God, and the sorest evil that he threateneth in his word. But when he should encounter with any of the enemies of his salvation, there he hath no courage. It is a marvel to see the strange distemper of a graceless soul. These poor wretches are so valiant in their wickedness, that they dare sin when the converted dare not; they dare break the Lord's-day, and dare drink, and revel, and take their pleasure, and neglect their souls, and slight God and all his mercy: they dare run upon his sorest wrath and upon hell itself. Tell

<sup>h</sup> Acts xxiv. 15. xxiii. 6. Rom. viii. 24.

<sup>k</sup> Ephes. ii. 12.

<sup>n</sup> 1 John iii. 3.

<sup>l</sup> Heb. vi. 19.

<sup>o</sup> Tit. iii. 5—7.

<sup>i</sup> Rom. xv. 4. v. 4, 5.

<sup>m</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 15.

<sup>p</sup> Tit. ii. 13.

them of these things, and you cannot much daunt them. It is their mad valour that they dare damn their own souls : like a distracted man, that dares leap into water and drown himself ; or a blind man that dares run into a coal-pit, because he knows not what he doth : such a kind of valour have unconverted men, when as in the way of their duty, they are the most notorious cowards in the world : they dare not venture upon a little suffering to prevent eternal sufferings ; or upon the frowns of men, or the danger of being undone in their worldly estates, though it be for a hope of everlasting glory. Nay, they dare not venture upon a very scorn ; but when they have some mind to turn and set upon duty, a wicked man can mock them out of all. Are not these valiant men indeed, that dare not look the feeblest enemy of their souls in the face, and yet dare venture on the flames of hell ? This is the common case of the unconverted.

But when grace hath made this change, then they are clean contrary affected ; then they are the most fearful men in the world, of God and his displeasure, and the most courageous against all the opposition of the world. Alas ! they find then that it is madness, not valour, to be fearless of the wrath of God : there is no standing before his indignation, and no dealing with Almightyness, if it be set against us. Therefore doth the poor soul throw down all weapons of opposition, and lay himself at the feet of God, as Saul, Acts ix. 3. and say, “ Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do ? ” Therefore we find converts use to come in trembling to Christ, Acts xvi. 29. and ix. 6. And Scripture tells us, “ The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom <sup>9</sup>. ” Now he dare not for his life do that which before he did : he durst have let fall an oath or a curse in his passion before ; but now he dares not : he durst have secretly deceived others, and have committed secret filthiness ; because no body saw him, he was out of fear ; but now he dares not ; for he feareth him that is greater than all. He durst have neglected duty, and have been indifferent for all company, and taken his fleshly pleasures, but now he dare not : for his life he dare not. O ! thinketh he, what if I should die in the act of that sin ? What if God should deny me repentance and

forgiveness? Where were I then? He durst before lie in a state of death, and now he dares not live quietly, till he have laboured after assurance of his salvation; that he may know it shall go well with him when he must be here no more. Now if he be tempted to know sin, this is his answer, 'I dare not do it, because I fear God<sup>r</sup>.' Other rulers oppressed the people, and so did not he; because he feared God. It is the description of the ungodly, that "there is no fear of God before his eyes<sup>s</sup>." And the description of a wicked place, "There is no fear of God in this place<sup>t</sup>." And the description of the godly, that "they fear God<sup>u</sup>." By this "fear of the Lord it is that men depart from evil<sup>x</sup>." This "tendeth to life<sup>y</sup>." In this "is strong consolation<sup>z</sup>." So that it is the work of conversion to bring the presumptuous, hardened sinner to this fear of the Lord: none do so much fear God as they.

But then for the threats of men, for worldly troubles or crosses, or losses, or any such thing that may stand in the way to heaven, how little do they fear them all? Here where the wicked are most cowardly, the converted soul is most courageous. Alas! he knows the difference between the creature and the Creator. And therefore, when he hath once got God on his side, he seeth he is safe, and the danger is most over. Then, O what light thoughts hath he of man, or of all that he can do! "In God have I put my trust," saith David, "I will not fear what flesh can do unto me<sup>a</sup>." <sup>2</sup>q.d. What is flesh to be compared with God? Can flesh resist him, and cross his pleasure, and overcome him? as Psal. cxviii. 6. "The Lord is on my side, I will not fear what man can do unto me;" and Psal. xli. 1—3. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will we not fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, though the waters thereof roar." So xxvi. 3. He knoweth what encouragement God hath given him, Ia. xli. 10. "Fear not, for I am with thee;" and vii. 4, 35. xiv. xli. 13, 14. xliv. 2, 8, li. 7. "Fear ye not the reproach of man, neither be afraid of their revilings; for the moth shall eat them up like a gar-

<sup>r</sup> Nehem. v. 15.<sup>s</sup> Psal. xxxvi. 1.<sup>t</sup> Gen. xx. 11.<sup>u</sup> Psal. lvi. 16. Eccles. viii. 12. xii. 13.<sup>x</sup> Prov. xvi. 6.<sup>y</sup> Prov. xix. 23.<sup>z</sup> Prov. xiv. 26.<sup>a</sup> Psal. lvi. 9.



ment, and the worm shall eat them like wool. But my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation." These words of God are the instruments of that change that is made on the converted soul, and therefore will make an impression like themselves. When God doth change men, he maketh them soldiers under the banner of Christ, and setteth them in fight against principalities and powers, even against a world of wicked enemies; and therefore he will certainly give them courage. This courage is an essential part of our change, and without some measure of it we cannot be Christians. He that will come to heaven must forsake all, and tread down all, and despise all in comparison of Christ, that he may not be a forsaker and a despiser of Christ. Therefore we find the apostle, in the name of himself and his fellow-soldiers, courageously triumphing over death, and the grave, and every enemy, 1 Cor. xv. 55. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" And Rom. viii. 18, 31. to the end: "The sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us; what shall we say then to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? It is God that justifieth, who shall condemn? What shall separate us from the love of God?" Read these triumphant words at leisure. Certain, a true believer hath more valour than to be turned out of the way to heaven, by any assault that a creature can make upon him.

(6.) The next passion that sheweth the change, is anger. This is a single passion, and hath no contrary. Before conversion, men are angry with those that trouble them in their sins. If you would but teach the ignorant, or persuade the obstinate, or cross them in the way of their beloved sins, O how angry will they be! as if you were their enemy, and did them some deadly hurt. You cannot speak to them so tenderly in a reproof, but they will think you do it to disgrace them, or in ill will to them, or at least that you make them worse than they are, and they think you make more ado than needs; as Amaziah did by the prophet<sup>b</sup>. They would stop his mouth if they could, who would stop their course of sinning. You shall not see one of many of them that have so much ingenuity as to take a

<sup>b</sup> 2 Chron. xxv. 16.

close reproof in good part! no, not from a minister, whose calling doth specially bind him to it. Hence is the common indignation that we meet with from poor blind wretches, when we do but our duty. Nay, when we do not half, nor the tenth part of our duty, in persuading them to a greater care of their salvation, they are offended with us, as if we did too much. O what a difference is there between their judgment, and the judgment of God, and our own conscience! And what a strait a poor minister, or private Christian, must needs be in between both! I confess to you all here, to my shame, that I remember no one sin in the world, that my conscience doth so much accuse and judge me for, as for doing so little for the saving of men's souls, and dealing no more fervently and earnestly with them for their conversion, or reformation. And yet every body is not pleased with that little which I do. I confess to you, that when I am alone, and think of the case of poor, ignorant, worldly, earthly, unconverted sinners, that live not to God, nor set their hearts on the life to come, my conscience telleth me, that I should go to as many of them as I can, and tell them plainly and roundly what will become of them, if they do not turn; and to beseech them with all the earnestness that I can, to come in to Christ, and change their course, and make no delay. And though I have many excuses come in from other business, and from disability and want of time, yet none of them all do satisfy my own conscience, when I consider what heaven and hell are, which will one of them be the end of every man's life; my conscience telleth me, that I should follow them with all possible earnestness night and day, and take no nay of them till they return to God. But if a man should do thus, how would it be taken? Some of them would think of him as Christ's natural kindred did of him<sup>c</sup>, when they were about to lay hands on him, and thought that he was besides himself; some would think him a precise fellow, that thought nobody should be saved but a few that make more stir than needs; and most would be angry with a man, as if he did them wrong, when he doth but seek to save them with fear, pulling them or keeping them out of the fire of sin<sup>d</sup>. Christ himself is an offence to the ungodly

<sup>c</sup> Mark iii. 21.<sup>d</sup> Jude 23.

world<sup>e</sup>. And therefore no wonder if we offend them. They will even bear a secret grudge in their minds at those men that trouble them in their sins; and “anger resteth in the bosom of these fools<sup>f</sup>.” If you should suddenly come in upon a thief or an adulterer with a light, who thought to have hidden his sin in the dark, he would be offended at it; and so are most wicked men with us.

But when converting grace hath changed the heart, the case is quite contrary. Then he will thank you for that which before he was angry at; he loveth no man so well as him that hath sought to save his soul. O, those reproofs and exhortations that God did bless to his conversion will stick by him for ever. He will bless God that ever he saw your face, and remember those words that helped to save him, as long as he liveth; he will take it for a greater benefit than if you had given him all your wealth. A special extraordinary love to those that were made the means of their conversion will stick for ever in their minds; the very words that you speak to them will be so remembered, that they would not for a world but they had heard these words. O, what a change is here suddenly wrought! He that was wont to say, ‘Look to yourselves, you shall not answer for me,’ and be angry with them that troubled him in the way to hell, now loveth their very names, and the remembrance of their kindness is pleasant to him. Even like a poor distracted man, that layeth about him, and abuseth the physician, and calls them all to naught that would cure him, as if they came to kill him; but when he is come to himself again, then he will give them hearty thanks. Somewhat like it is in a beast; if he have a thorn in his foot he will strive against you, and not let you pull it out; and if you cast him down to force him to it, he lieth as if you were about to kill him: but when it is out, and he perceiveth the ease, he will perceive you did not mean him any harm. So it is with a sinner before his conversion: he is angry with those that would do him good; but when once God hath turned his heart, he is quite of another mind. Then he saith, “Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head<sup>g</sup>.” And he taketh open “rebuke better

<sup>e</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 8. Rom. ix. 33.

<sup>f</sup> Eccl. vii. 9.

<sup>g</sup> Psal. cxli. 5.



than secret love; and the wounds of a friend to be better than the kisses of an enemy<sup>s</sup>." I know, by sad experience, that too much heart-rising against reproof doth remain in many that I hope are converted, but that is from their unconverted part; and if it were predominant, it would prove them unconverted men. For so far as they are gracious, thus it will be.

Yea, not only so; but when a man is converted, his anger is turned against himself. He was never so angry with others for reproving him, as he is now for sinning against God, and doing so much wrong to his own soul. Certainly there is in every converted soul a great indignation against themselves for their sin. They fall out with themselves, and think ill of themselves, and speak ill of themselves; yea, and could find in their hearts to be in part revenged upon themselves. You may see as much said by Paul, 2 Cor. vii. 11. where, among other effects of godly sorrow, he nameth indignation and revenge. A true repenting sinner could even find in his heart to execute some punishment upon himself. O, how he calls himself almost all that is naught! O, thinks he, what a fool, what a wretch, what a beast was I, to love the filth of sin better than the favour of God and the hopes of everlasting glory! What a madman was I, to be angry with those that would have kept me from damnation! Where was my wit and reason, when I so long forgot the work that I was born for, and made so light of the Lord that bought me, and thought so little of the place that I must live in for ever? Sirs, I do not speak this of mine own head. I have heard many, and many a one, through God's great mercy, after conversion, calling themselves worse than all this comes to; and expressing greater anger against themselves, than the wicked now express against those that would convert them. And you read, that even the saints in Scripture did the like; and that not by a secret confession, but left it on record to all generations. David calls himself an "ignorant fool," and as "a beast<sup>h</sup>." He cries out, when his heart smote him by true repentance, "I have sinned greatly; I have done foolishly<sup>i</sup>." Paul himself saith, that he was "even mad, and exceedingly mad,

<sup>s</sup> Prov. xxvii. 5, 6.<sup>h</sup> Psal. lxxiii. 22.<sup>i</sup> 2 Sam. xxiv. 10.

against" the Christians before his conversion<sup>k</sup>. And of himself and the rest, he confesseth, "We ourselves were sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another<sup>l</sup>." So that you see converted men are very angry with themselves for their sinful lives; you hear how they call themselves. If they used such language against another man, you would think it were railing; to call them fools and madmen, and all to naught. But, alas! they know by sad experience what they say, and yet by glad experience that it is now better with them. Therefore it is that they can easier bear the hard words of another, when they are forced to say as bad by themselves. Therefore is every converted sinner a man that loatheth himself for his iniquity<sup>m</sup>. Yea, they could find in their hearts, as I said, to be partly revenged on themselves. For though they must not destroy their own bodies, because they are not their own but Christ's, nor must any way hurt them, so far as to make them the less serviceable unto God; yet, in any other case, they can find in their heart to punish this flesh, and to make it smart, that hath led them to so much evil. Therefore they are the easier brought to fasting, and denying the flesh its desires, though they put it to trouble and pain; for as this doth tend to master it, and subdue it for the time to come, so a vindictive penance for the time past voluntarily undertaken, is but a lawful fruit of repentance, so that it do no whit disable us from the service of God. Hence it is, that a thorough convert doth more easily forbear a carnal pleasure, than a hypocrite or half-convert will do. For when they are pleading the lawfulness of their pleasure, and saying, 'what harm is it,' and 'why may I not do this or that,' he is willing to avoid it, though it should be but indifferent, as long as there is any great danger of sin in it. For what careth he if the flesh do smart for it, if they be the worst? Seeing it is the flesh that he is fallen out with, and hath done so much wrong to God and him. So that you see what a change conversion makes on a man's anger as well as other passions.

(7.) The last change we shall mention on the affections, that is made by converting grace, is in regard of a man's

<sup>k</sup> Acts xxvi. 11.

<sup>l</sup> Tit. iii. 3.

<sup>m</sup> Ezek. xxxvi. 31. xx. 43.

content and discontent. Before conversion, a man is discontent if he had not the desires of his flesh. He hath no rest in his mind, if he be poor or afflicted, and see not some hope of coming out of it. But for the love of God, and the life of grace, and the joys of the godly, he can be well enough content without these. If he had but what he would have in the world, take you the rest, for he thinks he can live well enough without them. When Cain's sacrifice was not accepted as his brother's, he was discontented at his brother, and consequently at God himself. He "was very wroth, and his countenance fell<sup>n</sup>." Because his brother was preferred before him, and was judged righteous when he was judged unrighteous. But he could be content without true righteousness itself, though he could not be content without the estimation of it. So can all ungodly men be content well enough to be ungodly, but not to be called ungodly; the name troubleth them, when the thing is so far from troubling them, that they will not be persuaded by any means to leave it. In a word, it is the things of this world that wicked men do seek content in, though they find it not. But as for spiritual and heavenly things, they can be better content in the case that they are now in; without them, than with them.

But conversion turneth the heart also in this regard. For when a man is once truly changed, he can be contented with any state, if he have but the favour of God, and the life of his grace, and communion with him; and without this he can be content with nothing. Nothing but Christ will serve his turn. If God will give him more upon the by, he will take it and be thankful; but without Christ he takes all things to be as nothing. What if he had lands and lordships, honour and dignity, what will this do for him without God in Christ? And blame him not, for he hath felt such a disease, that these things could not heal, when Christ, and Christ alone, could do it. And therefore Christ he must have whatsoever else he go without. A little of the world will serve with Christ, but nothing in the world will serve without him. As a wicked man is troubled and restless, because he hath not that which he would have, when every thing is not according to his mind. If friends, if es-

<sup>n</sup> Gen. iv. 5.



tates, if his house, or his body, or any thing be out of order, he is in discontent, because it is here that he seeks content, and therefore is troubled when he misseth of it. So is it with a believer in respect of Christ. If God hide his face, if the Spirit seem to withdraw, if Christ seem strange to him, if doubts of salvation come in upon his soul, he is as a bone out of joint, pained and troubled, and nothing will quiet him till he be set in joint again. Like a child that will be quieted with nothing but that which he cries for. If you offer him any thing else, he throweth it away, for that is not it which he crieth for. So is it with this poor Christian; if you tell him of riches, or honour, or pleasure, and not of Christ, and grace, and glory, you do but trouble him, for these are not the things that he looks after. There is but one thing in the world that can give him content; let him have that and he hath enough. O, did he but know that God is reconciled to him, and that he is united to Christ, and the Spirit is in him, and that he is in the safe way to the kingdom of glory, then if he have but food and raiment he can therewith be content<sup>o</sup>. Yea, or if he were without them, if God so dispose of it. For he hath learned by the teaching of converting grace, to abound and to want, and in what state soever he is, therewith to be content<sup>p</sup>. And therefore, his conversation is without covetousness, and he is content with such things as he hath, because God hath promised him that he will never leave him nor forsake him<sup>q</sup>. So this is another fruit of conversion about men's content, or discontent.

Having said thus much of the change of the affections, I might proceed to shew you, what particular reigning sins it is, that this work doth cast out of the heart, and what particular graces it there setteth up, and so go over all the chief sins and graces. But because this would hold me longer than I intend to stand upon this subject, and because these are comprehended in the change already mentioned, I shall pass these over; only that part which my text doth particularly express, I take it to be my duty particularly to handle.

“Except ye become as little children.” You see here, that Christ placeth much of the work of conversion in the

<sup>o</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 8.

<sup>p</sup> Phil. iv. 11.

<sup>q</sup> Heb. xiii. 5

making us to become "as little children." I shall here, therefore, stay awhile to tell you, 1. What is not meant by this; and 2. What is meant by it. 1. Christ doth not by this intend, that little children are altogether innocent, and that there is nothing in them that is hateful to God: for certainly they have all original sin; for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? or how can the parents beget holy children that are unholy themselves? and righteous children, that are themselves unrighteous? I mean, without sin, when they are not themselves without sin. I remember what an outcry there was<sup>a</sup> once against me in this town, for saying, that children by nature, considered as sinful and unsanctified, were as hateful in the eyes of God, as any toads or serpents are in ours: so that the people railed at me as I went along the streets; but doubtless the comparison is far too short; for every child by nature hath original sin, and sin is more hateful to God a thousand times, than any toad or serpent is to us. And therefore it is not by nature that children are righteous, or come to heaven. But it is by grace, through the blood of Christ that washeth them; and the covenant that forgiveth them; and baptism that sealeth this unto them; and they are capable also of the Spirit, to sanctify them. If there were not a willing nature in infants disposing them to evil, before they do it; as there is a stinging venomous nature in a serpent before he stings, or in a wasp even in the comb. How should it come to pass, that children should be so forward to evil as soon as they can commit it? Why are they not as forward to good? If children be not by nature, through original sin, even hateful to God, what need have we of the blood of Christ, to wash them and cleanse them from it? And of the water of baptism to seal this cleansing? Doubtless, there is not an infant in the world but would be for ever damned, if Christ's blood did not procure their pardon and reconciliation with God. It is not therefore in absolute innocence, that Christ here means that we must become as little children, before we can enter into the kingdom.

2. Nor yet is it in point of safety from the wrath of God, as if every child, or any by nature, were free from all dan-

<sup>a</sup> Fifteen years ago.

ger of everlasting perdition. By grace many are, but by nature none at all. From the hour of their birth many may be sanctified ; but it is the covenant of grace, and the grace of the covenant, that sanctifieth them<sup>r</sup>, and not the parent or nature.

The things, therefore, that Christ intendeth in the words of my text, are these two : First, That as children are but men entered into the world, and beginning their lives, and all things are new to them, so he that will be saved, must by conversion, as it were, begin the world anew. I pray you mark it, sirs, for Christ hath not given you this doctrine and example for nothing. Therefore it is that we find so often in Scripture mention made, of laying by, or destroying, or putting off the old man. In Rom. vi. 6. " Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." He that hath truly learned Christ, " hath put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and are renewed in the spirit of their mind ; and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness<sup>s</sup>." " Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth ; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence and covetousness, which is idolatry : for which things' sake, the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience : in the which ye also walked sometimes, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these ; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds ; and have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him<sup>t</sup>." Upon consideration of which great change, they are said also to be " dead, and risen again, and their life now hidden with Christ in God<sup>u</sup>." You see then that here is an old man to be put off, and destroyed, and a new man to be put on. That is, there must be such a change of the qualities of the soul, and the practice of the life, that a man must not, in his affection and conversation, be the same man that he was before. For though he be the same in

<sup>r</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 14.

<sup>s</sup> Eph. iv. 22.

<sup>t</sup> Col. iii. 5—10.

<sup>u</sup> Col. iii. 1—3.



substance and person, and the natural faculties of his soul, yet not the same in disposition and practice. In regard of his old corrupt disposition and conversation, he is called the old man, and in regard of his new disposition and conversation, he is called the new man. As a man that hath been an ill husband, and run out of all, and having nothing left, is cast into prison, and when he lieth there, he bethinks him of his folly, and at last a friend comes and payeth his debts, and setteth him up again, and giveth him a stock to trade with; we say of this man, 'he begins the world anew.' So when a poor sinner is in prison, under the wrath of God for his sin, and Christ comes in his gospel and telleth him, 'I have paid thy debt, and now I will set thee free, and give thee the help of my Spirit, and means; only see thou be faithful to me, and make better use of my mercy for the time to come.' Now this converted sinner is to begin the world, as it were, anew. As a man that hath fallen into a fever, that hath consumed all his flesh to the very bones, when he is cured his natural parts do make him new blood and flesh again. So when Christ hath cured the diseased soul, the old flesh is as it were consumed, and we are made anew. As a man that hath missed his way at the first setting out, and gone the contrary way all day, and at last comes to know that he was all this while out of his way, he is then to begin his journey anew. So is it with the converted man. When the illumination of the Spirit by the word, doth acquaint him, that he hath all this while been out of the way to heaven, he turneth again and saith, 'I am now to begin my life again.' The building that he hath been setting up all this while, is blown down by the breath of God's displeasure, or consumed by the fire of his curse. And therefore he must begin again, and build all anew from the very ground. Not an earthly building like the old, but a spiritual house for himself, that may be fit for his holy Spirit to dwell in\*. And may attain at last to the building not made with hands, eternal in the heavens†.

I beseech you, beloved hearers, mark this as we go, and see whether this be so with your own souls. I must tell every carnal, worldly sinner of you all, in the name of God, that your old condition is a miserable condition, and will

\* Rom. viii. 11. 2 Tim. i. 54.

† 2 Cor. v. 1, 2.

not serve the turn of heaven. If ever you will be saved, you must become as little children, and even begin the world anew. A new heart you must have, a new life you must lead, a new course you must take, and a new end you must aim at, and intend. But of this I must speak more anon, under the further proof and application.

Secondly, Another thing that Christ here principally intendeth in the text, is, that we must become as little children, in regard of humility, and all our designs and contrivances of the world. Though this be not the whole that he intends, yet this is the very reason for which he mentioneth the whole work of conversion, as necessary to salvation; and therefore he particularly giveth instance in this part: though children have the seed of all these in their natures, yet are they not acquainted with the acts of all, even when they begin to be acquainted with some. Children will very young shew their frowardness and disobedience, and sensuality, and some pride, but not by aspiring after great things in the world, and seeking after dominions, and dignities, and honours. They are in no care for enlarging possessions, for heaping up riches, for buying lands and lordships; they envy not the princes and lords of the world, but are as well contented with their lower matters, as kings and emperors are with their crowns; if they have meat, and drink, and clothes, and play, they are pleased: you never hear them murmur that they are not preferred to this office or that, in church or commonwealth: they do not contrive how to undermine others; nor to get above them in worldly dignities; nor to blast the name of others, that they may magnify their own. They disdain not those of the lowest rank; but the children of a lord, will play familiarly, if they be not dissuaded by others, with the children of beggars: in a word, though they have pride, and shew it in lower things, yet do they not look after the great matters of the world, as ambitious and covetous persons do. And this is the thing that Christ intendeth to his disciples, and to all Christians, that if ever they will enter into the kingdom of heaven, they must lay by their pride and vain-glory, and covetousness, and become as little children to all these honours and riches of the world. So that it is plain, that Christ maketh humility an essential part of the

work of conversion, and altogether inseparable from the heirs of his kingdom. As pride is thought to be the first sin of the devil, and was certainly the first, or one of the first that tainted the nature of man, when he would needs be as God, knowing good and evil; so is it not the last or least of the works of Christ on the soul in its recovery, to take down this pride, and humble us, and make us little in our own eyes. Satan drew us to aspire after a kind of god-head, and to be more than men; and Christ brings us to be as little children, and almost less than men. Satan drew us to be like him in pride, and Christ draweth us by doctrine and example, to be like to him in meekness and lowliness: satan would lift us up, that he might cast us down, and our fall might be the greater, by how much we attempted to mount the higher; and Christ casteth us down, that he may lift us up, and that our glory may be the greater, by how much we are made the baser by humility. Satan did but unsettle us by taking us off our rock and foundation, when he pretended to exalt us; and Christ doth settle us again by laying us low; and by teaching us meekness, he causeth us to find that rest to our souls, which in pride and vain-glory could not be found<sup>z</sup>. Satan by sin did make us low and vile in God's eye, and high and excellent in his own; and Christ by converting grace doth make us low and vile in our own eyes, and high and excellent in God's. By corrupted nature, men are still inclined to rise higher, and lift up themselves; but by grace he is disposed to think meanly of himself, and to set light by the honours and greatness of this world. And why is this, think you? Is it because grace debaseth men's spirits? No, but because it raiseth and ennobleth them. The converted soul doth slight the glory and greatness of the world, not on the same reasons as children do; i. e. because they know it not, or because it is above them; but because he is now acquainted with far greater things, and because that all on earth is below them. It is not because he would fain have greater matters, and cannot get them, but because he hath got a sight of such things in the world to come, in comparison of which, these things are as nothing, and therefore to be set light by, and even trodden under foot. He slighteth not crowns and

<sup>z</sup> Matt. xi. 28, 29.



kingdoms as things above him, but as things below him. The very humility of the saints hath a high design: when they lie in the dust, in self-abhorrency and self-condemnation, they are aspiring thence as high as heaven: their humble confession, and tears, and groans, have a tendency to that glory, which is above the sun. As a child that casteth his ball to the ground, that it may rebound the higher; or as a man that means to make the highest building, will dig deepest to lay the foundation; in the depth of their debasement they are seeking to be as the angels of God. It is heaven that they mean in every duty, in every prayer, in every lamentation they make for their infirmities, yea, in all they do in the world, it is nothing lower than heaven that they intend.

Perhaps you will by this time turn your judgment of them, as much as the barbarians did of Paul, Acts xxviii. 3. And as before you thought them too base, now you will say, that grace doth make them proud: but it is no such matter. Pride is the undue estimation of a man's self, and a desire of undue estimation from others; and it provoketh a man to seek after an unnecessary seeming greatness in the world, which tendeth to lay him as low as hell. But these high desires, and attempts, and expectations of the saints are accompanied with a deep sense of their own undeservings: they confess beforehand that they are worthy of nothing, when they live in hope of all things; they acknowledge that hell is their desert, when they aspire after heaven. And when they come thither, they will confess it was not from their merit, but will for everlasting glorify that grace that did bestow it. They lean in all their endeavours upon Christ, and never think to rise so high by any strength that is properly their own. They will readily confess, that they have nothing but what they received, and that it was God, and not themselves, that made them to differ; and therefore they dare not glory as if they received it not. When they have most, they most honour the giver: and when they do best, they magnify him that quickened, and strengthened them; and say, "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to thy Name give the glory<sup>a</sup>." The more they have, the better they know whence they had it. And as

<sup>a</sup> Psal cxv. 1.

their light increaseth, so doth it lead them further from themselves, and shew them their natural darkness, and the glory of that sun from whence all flows. It is not impossible for a low spirit to have high designs; and for a man to lie in deep self-accusations, with strongest hope of an angelical glory. A man may look toward heaven that lieth flat on the earth, so that his back be towards it, and not his face. It is no pride to desire that which God made for us; nor to seek after any greatness, that he hath promised and offered, and commanded us to seek for. The sin of pride lieth not in the elevation, and aspiring after things so great; but in the undueness and error of it, and in the falseness of the estimation; unless when it comes to desire to be even as God. It is not pride, but spiritual wisdom, to desire to be like to God in holiness, and to bear his image, for that is our perfection. It is not pride, to be unsatisfied with all the greatness and glory of this world; and restlessly to seek after a heavenly kingdom, and to hope to be like the Son in glory, and to be equal with the angels of God<sup>b</sup>: for God hath made us for this, and set it before us, as the prize we run for, and given us an infallible promise of it in his word: God would not have us base, when he forbids us to be proud. His service dignifieth us, if any thing be a dignity. He would not have us to be such earth-worms, so poor, so miserable, so blind, so naked, as to take up with the trifles and dirt of the world; but would have us live like men that have souls, which are immortal. Pride is the tympany of the soul, which consumeth the substance, and is a mortal disease: he loveth not our barrenness, nor is he against our substantial growth and nourishment, because he would cure us of this tympany that would kill us. It is wind and water, and not flesh and substance that is the matter of this disease. So that, when God takes you down, it is that he may lift you up; and he makes you lesser, that he may make you greater. And if you should yet imagine that humiliation is an unlikely way to exaltation, the Spirit of God and the life of grace have taught the true convert the contrary by experience: he knows it is God's ordinary way to bring life out of death, and light out of darkness, and all things out of nothing, and to be glorified by weak things.

<sup>b</sup> Luke xx. 36.

He knoweth that Christ went by the cross unto the crown, and was nearest his glory, when he was lowest in his humiliation; and so must he. For he that will be conformed to him in his glory, must be conformed to him in his sufferings<sup>c</sup>. We must suffer with him, that we may reign with him<sup>d</sup>. The prison, and the stocks, and scourging, and scorns, were the preparation for the throne, that Paul and many another must undergo. The lark that soareth highest, and singeth as it were in the face of the sun, was bred under a clod, as low as any other bird.

Beloved hearers, I beseech you hear not these things as matters that concern you not, but as the true description of the heirs of heaven. Thus must it be with you if you will be saved. While you are unconverted; O what stoutness and stubbornness is in the heart! How fain would men be somebody in the world! How ill do you take it to be lightly esteemed! You would think it a gallant thing, if you could but be greatest, and have all things done as you would have them, and all men beholden to you, and depend upon you, and you to be beholden to none, and to have men's knees bow to you, and your word to be the law, and all men give you the preeminency; to have your name to be great and famous, and to be honoured by all. O what an excellent life were this in the eyes of a carnal man! But converting grace will bring you down, if God in mercy please to give it you. 2. It will make you call yourselves less than the least of all his mercies<sup>e</sup>. "A worm and no man<sup>f</sup>:" a wretched man<sup>g</sup>. It will make you think yourselves unworthy to live; unworthy to come among the saints; unworthy to mention the name of God; or taste of his favour; and this not feignedly, but from your very hearts. It will make you marvel, that God should do so much for such a wretch as you; and that he had not damned you long ago. It will make confession of sin, even natural to you, and make you lay your mouth in the dust<sup>h</sup>. You will say worse of yourselves to God and man, than most others will say of you, and you will the more easily bear all slightings and reproaches, and unworthy usage from the world, because you know how ill you deserve of

<sup>c</sup> Phil. iii. 10.<sup>d</sup> Rom. viii. 17.<sup>e</sup> Gen. xxxii. 10.<sup>f</sup> Psal. xxii. 6.<sup>g</sup> Rom. vii. 24.<sup>h</sup> Lam. iii. 29.



God, as having used him and his grace so ill. Instead of snuffing at those that observe you not, and honour you not, you will think yourselves unworthy to be observed, and think the dishonour less than your due. Instead of snuffing that any should go before you, or be preferred above you, you will be ready to stoop to the feet of the meanest, for their good. You will esteem others, as far as reason will bear it, better than yourselves; and in honour prefer others before yourselves<sup>h</sup>. Instead of lording it over your brethren, you will think it your greatness to be the servants of all<sup>i</sup>.

It may be you will say, this is a strange person whom I now describe, and if there be no true converts but such as these, God help us all! for they are but few. I answer, this is the description that I find in the word; and be they few or many, it is these, and only these, that are the disciples that Christ will own. "For thus saith the Lord, the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones<sup>k</sup>." "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word<sup>l</sup>." "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth<sup>m</sup>." Read the text that Christ preached on Luke iv. 18. Rom. xii. 16. "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate." And Job xxii. 29. "He shall save the humble person." "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be brought low<sup>n</sup>." "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble<sup>o</sup>." I shall but trouble you to recite one half of the Scriptures that speak in this strain, and assure us that there is no true grace and Christianity without true humility. I confess there are several degrees of it in the sanctified, according to the several degrees of their sanctification, but it is predominant in them all.

<sup>h</sup> Rom. xii. 10.<sup>i</sup> Matt. xx. 27. xxiii. 11.<sup>k</sup> Isa. lvii. 15.<sup>l</sup> Isa. lxvi. 2.<sup>m</sup> Matt. v. 3—5.<sup>n</sup> Luke xiv. 11.<sup>o</sup> James iv. 6.

O that the ambitious great ones of the world, would lay this to heart. O that even all the leaders of Christ's flock, the preachers of humility, would lay this to heart! Then we should not have had the church so torn in pieces, by contending after precedency and preeminency, who should be lords, bishops, and above the rest; especially after such a check from Christ, as this text and divers others do contain. When his disciples strove who should be the greatest, this is Christ's decision of the controversy. Not by telling them that Rome shall be the ruler of all other churches, and the other four patriarchs shall be next to it; and the bishop of the metropolis or greatest cities, shall rule those of the lesser cities, and these shall rule those that dwell in a village. No, Christ takes another course to decide the controversy, by setting before them a child, by telling them that the "kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and they that exercise authority are called benefactors: but ye shall not be so; but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he that is chief, as he that doth serve<sup>p</sup>." One would think that the very thoughts of Christ's washing his disciples' feet, and saying to them, that thus they should do by one another, should shame proud ambition from among the preachers of such a Gospel. O that our stubborn people also would remember this! that are too good to obey the word of the Lord; and too stout to be admonished, or come for instruction to their ministers; yea, or patiently to bear a reproof. All these persons, and many more may call themselves Christians as long as they will, but Christ that knows his sheep will not own them. Believe it, sirs, it is as impossible to be a true Christian without true humility, as for a house to be without a foundation.

I have shewed you now what it is to become as little children, so far as is beyond controversy. But there is somewhat more that might be worth our inquiry, whether they were not baptized and purified children, as such, that Christ here intendeth; in whom even the root of pride is mortified? But this I will not presume to meddle with, because on this subject I would deliver you nothing, but what among the godly is commonly agreed on. But this I may well say in general; that this text in part, and others

<sup>p</sup> Luke xxii. 25, 26.

more fully do tell us, that Christ did not look upon infants as at so great a distance from him, as the Anabaptists now do.

III. Having done with the work of Conversion on the Judgment, and on the Heart, the next thing to be done, is to shew you the change that it makes on Men's Lives: for this must be looked after as well as the former. The same God that ruleth the heart, doth rule the life; and he that requirereth the cleansing of the heart, doth require also the cleansing of the hands. The soul commandeth the body, and the heart will dispose of the life; if therefore the heart be changed, the life must needs be changed too. The root is for the fruit; and the life within, is much to enable us to action without. When God giveth us the root and life of grace and holiness, it is that we may bring forth the fruit, and do the works of grace and holiness. He makes not the new creature for nothing, or to be idle, much less to go on in serving the devil: but he makes him for a new work, even to serve the living God<sup>a</sup>. "For we are his workmanship, created to good works, which God hath ordained that we should walk therein<sup>r</sup>." The excellency of his peculiar people, is "to be zealous of good works<sup>s</sup>." A good heart and a good life are inseparable, as to the main; but the life may further outgo the heart, than the heart can outgo the life: for there may be a reformed life that is in many respects good, while the heart is bad; but the life is never worse than the heart: for there can be no evil of sin in this life, but what the heart is the proper cause of. "For out of the heart come murders, adulteries, theft, false-witnessing, blasphemy, and such like sins, which defile the man<sup>t</sup>." It is therefore a vain boast of those men, that take on them to be converted, when they live as they did before: neither God nor any wise man will believe them, though they may thus deceive themselves. Seeing then, there must be a new life, with a new heart, or no salvation, let us a little particularly inquire, wherein that newness of life doth consist.

1. The first and principal change of the life, consisteth in the covenant which the converted soul doth make with Christ. As this is principally in the heart, and so containeth faith and holy resolution, we have spoken of it

<sup>a</sup> 1 Thess. i. 9.    <sup>r</sup> Ephes. ii. 10.    <sup>s</sup> Tit. ii. 14.    <sup>t</sup> Matt. xv. 18—20.



before ; but now I mention it as expressed with the tongue ; for as with the heart we believe to righteousness ; so with the mouth is confession made to salvation <sup>u</sup>. A resolved heart will have a resolved tongue ; it will carry a man to express his resolution, as there is convenient opportunity, both to God and man ; this covenant might be verbally entered before in the face of the congregation, in our baptism by our parents, who are authorized by God in Scripture, and nature to enter their children into it for their good ; but if the heart did never truly own that covenant, when you come to the use of reason, you cannot expect to be saved by it. Your own covenant with Christ, when you come to age, is then as necessary to your salvation, as your covenant by your parent in baptism was before, to put you into that right which infants have by virtue of the promise ; this covenant is the very bond, and foundation of all the following obedience of your lives, when God hath opened the eyes of a sinner to see his great necessity of Christ, and the glory and felicity that he hath procured, and withal to see the universality and freeness of the promise : and that God doth call to him to consent to his terms, and accept the mercy freely offered. Converting grace doth move the heart to acceptance, and the tongue and life to make expression of it. There might be half-covenant, and false, hypocritical promises before, which for want of sincerity were soon broken, and come to nought ; but conversion entereth us into a true, and firm, and durable covenant ; when the poor sinner doth once understand that it is not long of God, if he be shut out, and that Christ hath put in no bar of exception against him more than any other in the promise of pardon and salvation ; and when he understandeth that God doth but stay for his consent, and all the stop is at his own will, and when he understandeth thoroughly what reason he hath to be willing, and how little there is to be said against it ; then he doth set up his resolution, and give up himself in covenant unto God. It may be before he misunderstood the covenant, and thought that Christ was unwilling to shew mercy to such an one that had done him so much wrong, and he doubted whether God would bid him welcome, if he should come home ; but when he is better informed, he ma-

<sup>u</sup> Rom. x. 10.

nifesteth his consent. God saith to him in the Gospel, ‘Sinner, wilt thou be mine?’ And he answereth, ‘Yea, Lord, with all my heart; and glad that thou wilt accept of such a wretch as I.’ God saith to him in his Gospel and by his ministers, ‘Sinner, thou hast undone thyself, and art under my wrath and curse, I have redeemed thee by the blood of my dear Son; he hath bought thee and will save thee, if thou wilt be his; what sayest thou? Wilt thou heartily give up thyself to him to be saved? Shall he be thy Saviour and thy Lord?’ And the sinner answereth, ‘Yea Lord, with all my heart; nothing more welcome to me than Christ. It is Christ that my wounded soul doth want. It is he, and only he that can save me: I will be his, and take him to be mine, and gladly make with him an everlasting covenant.’ Before, though Christ were offered a thousand times, the stupid sinner laid it not to heart, and would not come to him that he might have life<sup>x</sup>: but when he is drawn by the Father, and secretly illuminated and converted by his grace, then is he heartily glad of the match; he takes this as the day of marriage between Christ and him. Christ giveth up himself to the sinner, and the sinner giveth up himself to Christ. I know that the mere covenant of the lips alone, will prove no man to be heartily converted; but this in connexion with that of the heart will prove it. Have you been brought to this, beloved hearers? To do that by yourselves at age, which you did by your parents in baptism? Have you gladly taken Christ, as he is offered to you? And have you delivered up yourselves to him? I tell you, converting grace will bring you into covenant: this covenant is the very sum of all your change: all is contained in this one word, ‘The making up the match between Christ and you.’ Yea, and it will make you upon fit opportunity, even manifest this to others; and even glory in your Saviour, and be willing openly to confess him before the world, and let them know that you are in covenant with him.

(1.) And I must tell you in a word, that if this covenant be sincere, it will have these qualifications following. 1. It will be done in some competent measure of understanding and judgment: you will know what Christ is, and what he

<sup>x</sup> John v. 40.

hath done, and what need you have of him, and how he is offered, and upon what terms he is to be received and made yours. For there can be no true covenant, when you are utterly ignorant of the very substance of the covenant. 2. If it be a true covenant, it must be entire, you must take that is offered you, and not only a part: you must yield to the terms of the covenant, and give up yourselves wholly to Christ again. It is not to take Christ to some uses, and not to others, as to justify and save you from hell, and not to sanctify or save you from sin. 3. You must do it resolvedly and habitually, from a rooted habit and resolution of the very heart; and not from a sudden fear, or flash of conviction under a moving sermon, and as many will do in sickness and extremity, and then forget all, or grow cold again, and return to their vomit, when the fit is over: like those, Psal. lxxviii. 34—37. “When he slew them, then they sought him, and they returned and inquired early after God, and they remembered that God was their Rock, and the High God their Redeemer: nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and lied unto him with their tongues, for their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.” And ver. 10. “They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law.” 4. If you covenant sincerely, it must be for a present return, and not only for the time that is to come. It must be from that day forward, without any more delay. It is not a true covenant, which excepteth but a day. 5. And if you truly covenant with Christ, you will do it unreservedly: yea, and resolve against all reservation. You will not secretly make exceptions, and say in your hearts, ‘I will be the servant of Christ, if he would use me as I would have him, and deal easily with my flesh, and not destroy my worldly interest; I will follow him as far as the way is fair, and no further:’ No, but you will unreservedly give up yourselves to his dispose, and say, ‘I am sure I cannot have Christ, and life upon terms too hard. I am sure that however he deal with me, I can have no better master, nor can I take a better course; and if he do as hardly by me as evèr he did by any of his servants, I know I shall be no loser by him, nor ever have cause to repent of the bargain. And therefore I am resolved I will give up myself to him. He is wise, and just,



and merciful, let him do with me as he will.' This is the principal effect of true conversion, to bring the soul thus to close with God in Christ.

(2.) And in the same covenant, as the converted soul doth close with Christ, so doth it renounce all other competitors. Before he served another master, but now he understandeth it must be so no more. There is no serving God and mammon, the Spirit and the flesh. Christ and satan are as unreconcilable as light and darkness. It is the purpose of Christ to bring men from the captivity of satan, and of sin<sup>y</sup>. He letteth the sinner know, that there is no hopes of joining these together: either the devil or Christ must be forsaken; either sin or mercy must be renounced. The word, and Spirit, and minister say to him, 'Thou seest, sinner, how the case standeth, God is resolved, he will not change. Never think of any other way; either let sin go, or let heaven go; take which thou wilt, and leave which thou wilt; but never think of keeping both.' Hereupon the sinner lets go his sins, and renounceth the world, the flesh, the devil; and engageth himself that Christ alone shall be his Saviour and his Lord, and God alone his chiefest good. He will take the promised glory for his portion; and this is the other part of the covenant. At this one blow the root of every sin is destroyed. But principally, that which is the centre and sum of all the rest, and that is, self-love, and self-seeking. Every unconverted sinner liveth to himself, and is addicted principally to his carnal interest, and the main work that Christ hath to do upon the soul, is, to take down this carnal self. This is the great enemy that he bendeth his force against. And the subduing of this is his chiefest victory. This is the great idol of every unregenerate man, that must be taken down, or there is no salvation. The very nature of conversion, is, a turning from carnal-self to God by Christ. This therefore is to be inquired after by all that would find this change upon themselves. And I beseech you brethren be very careful in this particular. For as this part of the work is of absolute necessity, so the interest of carnal-self is very strong and deep-rooted, and exceeding much befriended by our nature. So that here is the main difficulty of all your work. O, it is no easy mat-

ter for a man unfeignedly to deny himself: it is a subtle enemy that will keep much secret life and strength, when it seemeth to be overcome. And though you may think in an affliction, or time of humiliation, that self is brought very low; yet, when prosperity comes again, or when its interest lieth at the stake, and you are called either to costly duties or sufferings, you will then see better what strength your carnal-self yet retaineth. Many a man hath gone far, and done much, and shamefully fallen away at the last, because they were never brought thoroughly to self-denial. It is the remaining interest of carnal-self that leadeth some to fleshly lusts, and some to proud ambitious ways, and some to drown themselves in the cares of this world, and so prove wretched hypocrites at the last. I do therefore as earnestly advise every soul of you to all possible care in this point, as I would do to any thing in the world. Whatever you do, be jealous of this sin. Fight neither against small nor great, but against this enemy, carnal-life; and do not too easily believe that it is overcome. Conquer this and conquer all. This is the life and soul of all sins. The very use and end of all sin is flesh-pleasing. As he that hath right ends, hath done more than half his work for his salvation, so he that keepeth up his fleshly ends is still a servant of the flesh, whatever he may do that seemeth to be for God. He that hath got the victory of this self, hath broke the heart of every sin. And in this fall of carnal-self, there are three great master sins go down. 1. Pride. 2. Covetousness. 3. Voluptuousness. He that before was set upon the exalting of himself, is now set upon the glorifying of God. And he that lived to the world, and was a drudge for earth, is now employed for higher things, and he that must have his sports and pleasures, and fleshly ease, hath now learned to use his body as a servant, and no longer to suffer it to be the ruler of his soul. But of these I have spoken elsewhere, so that I will say no more of them now. Only this, that the destroying of these three sins, pride, covetousness, and voluptuousness, and in them carnal-self, is one half of the work of true conversion. As the other half is the setting up of God, and the turning of the soul by Christ to him, and an unreserved dedication and resignation of ourselves to him.

2. When the sinner is thus engaged in covenant to God, the next thing that he doth, is, actually to forsake that sin which he hath renounced, and make good the covenant that even now he made. For it is not a false dissembling promise, that converted sinners make to God. There is no hold to take of another man's word. Before conversion, all promises come from so low a principle that they quickly vanish, and the heart of such a man is as changeable as the moon: but when they are converted, you shall see that they are men of their word, and did mean as they said, and were in good sadness with God, and that they are indeed fallen out with sin. They do not now think to put off the righteous God with words, and keep that sin which in their covenant they did renounce: no, they know that that would but bring greater wrath upon them, and cause God to deal with them as perjured covenant breakers, besides all the rest of their sins; and therefore the same grace that caused them to promise, causeth them to perform. O what a sudden change doth appear in the lives of such as these, when God hath thoroughly done his work! I know the work on the heart is the greatest work, but that is not seen so much by men, and therefore not so much admired. But the life is seen by others, and therefore it is a wonder in the eyes of the world many times, to see the change of a converted sinner: when they see, that he that lived in fleshly pleasures, doth now despise them, and hath no such mind of his former sports and delights! They marvel what aileth the man that he is so changed, when they hear him that was wont to curse and swear, and deride those that feared God, to lament now his wickednesses, to reprove others that do as he was wont to do, and warn them to take heed of going that way. People will marvel what hath befallen the man that hath made this alteration. They do not see what he hath seen, nor know the workings of the Spirit of God upon his soul. They know not how God hath been hammering his hard heart, and melting it, and forming it to this. They were not witnesses of the strivings and conflict in his spirit, which was between Christ and the flesh; and therefore when they see not the cause within, the change without will seem the stranger to them. And indeed it is a kind of miracle to see the effects of the power of Christ, and how suddenly oft-



entimes the change is made, that would never have been made by any other means. Take a man that hath only some light convictions, and a half-repentance, and how long is he in making a half-reformation. If he were wont to swear or curse, or frequent alehouses and vain company, he cannot suddenly leave it, but sometimes he restrains it a little, as if he were reformed, and sometimes he falls to it again, because he is not truly changed. But when he is converted indeed, you shall see him ordinarily leave all these sins even on a sudden. He that was wont to swear or curse, you shall never hear him do it again. He will flee from the places that before he delighted in. He is moved by a more effectual principle, and therefore will not stand trifling in the business. Grace makes a man know, that sin, and satan, and the flesh are his deadly enemies, that seek the everlasting damnation of his soul, and therefore it is the less marvel, if he use them as enemies. If friends have weapons in their hands, they will but play with them, but deadly enemies will seek the blood of one another. There is difference between fencing and fighting for life. Though a man that knoweth nothing of their meaning, might think a fencer is fighting in good sadness, seeing he seemeth to make as great a stir as if it were so indeed. Yet the issue will shew you, that it is otherwise, because you see that there is no blood shed, nor men killed. So is it with an hypocrite in his seeming reformation; when he makes the greatest stir against his sin in confessing and prayer, and other means, yet he will not resolvedly cast it away, but he secretly useth it as his friend, while he openly abuseth it as his enemy; and he puts it into his bosom, while he calls it all to naught. He will not be brought unfeignedly to renounce it, and give it a bill of divorce, and cast it out as a man doth his vomit, with resolution never to take it in more. O how sweetly doth he roll it in his thoughts in secret, when he frowneth upon it with the severest countenance! How easily is he drawn to it again and again, when he takes on him to repent of it and abhor it! But it is clean contrary with a man that is converted. Though the remnants of sin will remain in him while he liveth, yet as to the reign of it, he presently casteth it off, and biddeth defiance to it. He fighteth against it in good earnest, as knowing that either

he or it must die. He casteth it up as a loathsome vomit which he will not take into his stomach again; you shall quickly see by the course of his life, that his heart is changed. Before true conversion comes, what a stir have we with wretched sinners to leave a base lust? To forsake their drunkenness, or covetousness, or uncleanness, to leave their swearing and cursed speaking, and yet we cannot prevail with them; sometimes they will, and then again they will not; sometimes a flash of conviction flieth in their faces, and they are a little affrighted, and then they will presently repent and mend; but when the fit is over, you shall see that it is not a change of his disposition or nature; it was but a little falling out with their sin, which leaveth them faster friends when they are reconciled. But conversion maketh an unreconcilable enmity. Away goes former sinful customs and courses; away goes covetous practices, and wicked speeches, and proud fashions, and courses. As Sarah thrust out Hagar and Ishmael out of her house, and would receive them no more. If you have deadly enemies in your house, you will thrust out them and all that they have. If a man should sit in a dark room among snakes and toads, and think verily that there were no such matter, but he were in his bed-chamber, you might persuade him long enough to come away, and tell him of the danger; but he will not stir, but laugh at you, because he doth not believe you. But if you come into the room with a light, and he see them crawling all about him, and making at him, then you need not another word to bid him be gone; he is quickly up, and leaveth them with abhorrency. We tell unconverted sinners of the hatefulness of sin, and the danger that they are in, and pray them to leave it, but they believe us not, and do but laugh at it; but when the Spirit of God bringeth in the light, and they see all this with their own eyes, that it is even worse than ever we made it, then away goes their sins without any more ado. Like a child that hath a fine yellow crab which he taketh for an apple, he will not part with it, nor let you take it from him; but when he hath set his teeth in it once, and tasted it, he will throw it away without any more ado. If such a foolish child be playing with a nettle, while he taketh it for a common herb, he is bold with it, but when he feels the sting, he

throweth it away ; or if he be playing about a nest of wasps or bees, while he takes them to be but harmless flies, you cannot call him away, but when once they have stung him, he cries and runs away of himself, without another word. Even so is it with a poor sinner about his sins before conversion. We pray him to come away, and tell him that sin hath a sting, and a deadly sting, and assure him from the word of God that it will be bitterness in the latter end, and he makes no great matter of our words, but can hear us, as if we came into the pulpit to tell him a tale, and not to save his soul from hell. And therefore he can go on in his old way for all this, and take his cups, or follow the world and his fleshly lusts, and give the preacher leave to talk. But when converting grace comes, it makes them taste the bitterness and sourness of sin, and then they quickly spit it out. It makes them feel the sting and smart, and then they cry to God for help, and wish they had never known it, and run away from it with detestation. Grace bringeth in that light from God, which shews them that which they did not see before. How that all this while they have had a multitude of crawling serpents in their bosom, and they have been playing even at the brink of hell. And when they see this with their own eyes, it is time for them to take another course.

If you doubt all this that I say, whether conversion doth make a man thus cast away his sin, while the hypocrite stands dallying with it, and cannot leave it, look into the example of all true converts. Or if that do not satisfy you, look into the infallible word of God. How eagerly was Saul going on in his persecution, till the light from heaven did stop his course, and the voice and grace of Christ did change his mind ! Acts ix. But do you read ever Paul did persecute any more ? or doth he delay and take time to consider of the matter before he would leave his former sin ? No ; but he presently forbears, and betakes himself to another course. And Tit. iii. 2—5. when he confessed the former sinful course of himself and others, he telleth you now how the matter is mended. And no marvel ; for the man that liveth in his former sinful way, can never be saved, whatever change of the heart he may pretend. “ Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God ?



Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revellers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God <sup>x</sup>." Now you see that conversion makes an effectual change of the life. Ye were such; but now it is not so, ye are washed, ye are sanctified by the Spirit of God. And, Isa. xxx. 22. when God mentioneth the conversion of these people, he saith concerning their former sins: 'Thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth, thou shalt say to it, get thee hence.' With what detestation will a converted sinner say to his former sin, 'Get thee hence! It is by thee that I have suffered, and had like to have been undone for ever. It is by thee that I have so much wronged God, and therefore, away with thee, get thee hence.' So in Isa. xxxi. 6, 7. "Turn ye unto him, from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted; for in that day every man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made you for a sin." And the description of conversion runs thus, Ezek. xviii. 31. "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed against me, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit: for why will you die, O ye house of Israel?" And Ezek. xx. 7. God commandeth them: "Cast ye away every man the abomination of his eyes;" and ver. 8. "They rebelled, and did not cast away every man the abomination of his eyes." "Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light: let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying <sup>y</sup>." "Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well <sup>z</sup>." "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon <sup>a</sup>." "Amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of

<sup>x</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 9—11.<sup>y</sup> Rom. xiii. 12, 13.<sup>z</sup> Isa. i. 16, 17.<sup>a</sup> Isa. lv. 6, 7.

the Lord your God, and he will repent him of the evil<sup>b</sup>.” An hundred more such passages might be cited, wherein it is most evident, that there is no true conversion of the heart, if the sin of the life be not also cast away.

If any will here desire to be curious, and to know just how much conquest the least degree of grace doth make, and how much actual sins may stand with sincerity of grace? Or if any will imagine, that because there is actual sin in the converted, that, therefore, there is no discernible difference between their reformation and other men’s, I answer them as followeth. 1. A strong degree of grace is easily known by him that hath it, by the thorough reformation both of heart and life. 2. The weakest degree of grace is not ordinarily known, and therefore you cannot expect that I should make it known. For he that hath so little grace as to sin as much as will stand with true grace, shall scarce ever know that he hath any true grace at all in that condition. He is not fit for such a condition, nor would it do him good till he were fitter for it. 3. There is no change of the life that will discover sincerity certainly to others, nor to themselves considered alone, without the change of the heart, but there is a wickedness of the life that will prove a wickedness of the heart even unto others; much more to men themselves, who may know both immediately. 4. By this one mark you may know whether the sins of your lives, be they great or small, are certain proofs of an unconverted, graceless heart or not. In every true converted man, the main bent of his heart and life is against sin, and his chief desire and endeavour is to destroy it; but in others it is not so. Whatsoever kind of sinning therefore will not stand with such a bent of heart and life, with such a desire and endeavour, will prove that man to be graceless or unconverted that doth commit it. Now how far a man’s sin is with, or against the main predominant bent of his own heart and life, he may discern himself by diligent observation.

3. I have hitherto spoke only of sins of commission, which are cast away when the soul is changed. The next part of the reformation of the life is in point of duty. A converted soul hath presently another work to do. As he hath set his heart upon another end, and looketh after ano-

<sup>b</sup> Jer. xxvi. 13.

ther portion and inheritance ; so hath he other means to use, which are suitable to the nature of the end which is to be obtained. A heavenly felicity is not gotten by earthly means. “ Learning to do well,” therefore is ever joined with “ ceasing to do evil<sup>c</sup>.” “ Seeking the Lord while he may be found, and calling on him while he is near,” is joined with “ forsaking wicked ways<sup>d</sup>.” He that is “ turned from the power of satan, is turned to God<sup>e</sup>.” Before conversion the wretched sinner had no pleasure in God, and therefore no pleasure in his service ; and therefore was seldom, and cold, and careless in it ; and gave God nothing but the leavings of the world and the flesh, and what he could spare ; and put him off with some formal, superficial, cheap kind of service that would cost him but little. But when converting grace hath made a change, as God is his delight, so is his work and worship. He sees a world of work before him, which they made no conscience of before. As I told you of Paul, Acts ix. 11. he falls a praying as soon as he is converted ; and from praying, he proceeds to the preaching of that Gospel which he persecuted before. It made the people wonder to see him that had been persecuting all that called upon the name of Jesus, but a little before, to preach for them a little after, Acts ix. 20, 21. The text saith, “ all that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name at Jerusalem, and came hither to that intent, to bring them bound to the chief priests ?” So is it to this day : when a poor sinner that was wont to mock at a holy life, and never was used to call upon God, or at least but heartlessly, and with the lips ; that made no conscience of praying in his family, or instructing them, or holy spending the Lord’s day, shall now be as diligent in these as any : when the Bible is in his hands, or other good books, that had rather before have had a pack of cards, or dice, or worldly business : when a man was wont to set light by these things, is now set upon them, and cannot live without them : this makes the world about him amazed, and say, Is not this the man that scorned sermons, who now followeth after sermons ? Is not this he that was against these things as much as any, that now is set so much upon them ? I know a man that is

<sup>c</sup> Isa. i. 17.<sup>d</sup> Isa. lv. 6.<sup>e</sup> Acts xxvi. 18.



now unconverted, may be much in the use of means, but here is the difference: to a converted man, the obedience of God is his chiefest work and business, to which all other things are made to stoop: but to the unconverted, the work of the flesh, and world is the chief, and the service of God must stoop to that. Sirs, if any of you dream that you are converted, and yet will not be brought to the works of obedience, both in holiness to God, and righteousness to men, you do but wilfully deceive yourselves. Do you think a man can love God above all, as every true Christian doth, and not seek him above all? Or that a man can have a heavenly heart, and not a heavenly life? It cannot be. If you had rather sit at home, when you should be attending upon God in the public assembly, or enjoying private helps for your souls; or are cumbered about many things, when you should be looking after the one thing necessary; it is a sign that you have not chosen the better part: whenever the heart is changed to God, the main bent of the life will presently consist in the seeking of God.

4. A new heart will have a new tongue. The fruit of it will appear in the scope of a man's discourse; "for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh<sup>f</sup>." I know a man may force his words, and therefore I still say to you, that these proofs from the outward actions, are stronger for the negative, than the affirmative. An evil tongue will prove an evil heart, but to prove a man sincere, there must be both heart and tongue. But certain it is, that though words may be counterfeit, yet true conversion doth always change the speech, and make the tongue also serviceable to those higher ends, which the heart is newly set upon. He that before had no mind to speak of any thing but earthly and fleshly matters, is now inquiring after other matters. The first words that we read of the converted Jews, Acts ii. 37. and the converted Jailer, Acts ix. and Paul, when he was converted, Acts ix. were, what God would have them do that they might be saved. Before, the very discourse of sin, and grace, and Christ, and the life to come, were a trouble to them, but now it is otherwise. They know they have their tongues for no greater use, nor can they better employ them, than in seeking direction for

<sup>f</sup> Matt. xii. 34.

their everlasting happiness. Now, if you mark them in the company that they come into, if they have any fit opportunity, they are lamenting their former sinful life, or warning others to avoid the way that they were led into, or telling men of the evil of sin, and the need of Christ and grace, or asking help of those that can help them; how to search their hearts; how to overcome the remnant of their sins; and how to carry on the work of God, that they may be ready for death and judgment, and get safe to heaven. You that are carnal, do wonder that men speak so much of these things, and you are weary to hear them, but you know not the change that is made upon their hearts. Can you blame a man to talk of his everlasting condition, and of that which is of greater moment than all the matters of the world? Can you blame a man to talk most of that which he mindeth most, and which his very heart is set upon? If his tongue be of heaven, while his heart is on earth, then he is an hypocrite: but would you not have a man's tongue to follow his heart, when his heart is right? Yet some men are so perverse, and so against the things of God, that they are ready to say, Why cannot they keep their religion to themselves? Cannot they be religious in secret, without talking of it so much to others? As if the heart only were made for God, and the tongue for the world, the flesh or the devil. As if a man should talk of nothing but the childish toys and trifles of the world, for fear of seeming an hypocrite, or for fear of troubling these queazy souls. Shall the Holy Ghost make such a change on the heart of a sinner, and shall not the tongue partake of it, or express it? Can Christ and his Spirit dwell in the heart, and the tongue conceal so blessed an inhabitant! Can a man have a taste of heaven upon his heart, and the kingdom of God begun within him, and yet not express his life or joy? Or is it meet for him that hath found the way to heaven, to hold his tongue, and let others quietly post to hell? Should a man that hath narrowly escaped damnation, himself be silent, when he seeth others go in the same way that he had liked to have perished in? Who will not call to another to take heed, that hath escaped a quicksand himself? Or set up a bush, that those that follow may see the danger? Is it not a strange conceit of these men, that would have the

converted so cruel to all that are yet unconverted ; so unthankful to God that hath mercifully delivered them ; so senseless of matters of the greatest weight, and so serviceable to satan the great deceiver, as to say nothing of such unspeakable things as these ? What ! have the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, and say nothing of it ! Have the pardon of sin in the blood of Christ, and say nothing of it ! What ! see many hundred souls in danger of damnation, and say nothing, but let them perish ! It cannot be ; it must not be ; it is a most unreasonable thing to desire it. Our tongue is our glory, it is the principal instrument of manifesting our mind, by which man differeth from all other inferior creatures : and should we not use it for God and the greatest things ? What sottish people are these to think their worldly matters fit for their discourse, and the matters of everlasting life, unfit ! To think it no harm to jest and talk foolishly, and tell idle tales, and such a man they take for a pleasant companion, and never find fault with him. But for the things that may honour God, or tend to men's salvation, or to destroy sin and cross the devil, here we must be silent, and keep our religion to ourselves. Did ever these wretches believe Jesus Christ ; " that by their words they shall be justified, and by their words they shall be condemned <sup>g</sup> ? " Did they ever believe, or regard the words of the Holy Ghost, Eph. v. 3, 4. ? " But fornication, uncleanness or lasciviousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints ; nor filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jestings, which are not convenient, but rather giving of thanks." And Eph. iv. 29, 30. " Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth ; but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers, and grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." " Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another <sup>h</sup>." " Exhort one another daily while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin <sup>i</sup>." " If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God, that God in all things may be glorified <sup>k</sup>." Abundance of such passages are in Scripture, which may tell you what to think of the folly of such

<sup>g</sup> Matt, xii. 37.<sup>h</sup> Col. iii. 16.<sup>i</sup> Heb. iii. 13.<sup>k</sup> 1 Pet. iv. 11.



carnal men; and may assure you that a converted, heavenly heart, will always have a new and heavenly tongue.

5. A changed heart will have change of company, if it may be had. There is somewhat in nature that disposeth all men to delight in that company which is most suitable to their disposition. While their hearts are carnal, they love the company of such: a man that is of their mind and way, and will break a jest, and be merry with them, or talk with them about their worldly matters, is the best companion for them; for the company of mortified and heavenly men, they have no pleasure in it. They do but mar their mirth with putting in words about the evil of sin, and death, and judgment, and everlasting things: they do but trouble them, and cast them into dumps, and therefore they have no mind to their company. But when converting grace hath changed them, their minds in this are changed also. O how sapless and unsavoury then is it to them to sit or walk in the company of such that have never a word of God, or that may help them in the matters that their hearts are set upon! Their merry talk, and fine discourse, is to him but as the crackling of thorns in the fire. It doth but trouble him, and move him to compassionate such empty souls that have no God, no Christ, no heaven to talk of, but mere unprofitable trifles; but the company of those is sweet to him, that will discourse about the matters of his salvation; that will tell him how he may get more grace, and open to him more the mysteries of the Gospel, and speak of the riches of God's love in Christ, or tell him of the dangers that are yet before him, or the duties that he must perform. These matters are now savoury to him, for these he knows do indeed concern him, and are worth the talking of. When a man is in a strange country a thousand miles off, it doth him good to meet with his own countrymen, and talk with them about his friends, and family, and his estate, and inheritance, and home, which he must return to: one hour of this discourse is sweeter to him, than an hundred with the strangers of the country, about matters that are little to him: so is it here; a Christian that knoweth he is a stranger in this world, and that his God, his salvation, his home, his inheritance are all in the world to come had rather far discourse with a heavenyminded man about

his Father, and everlasting works and blessedness, than with worldly men about this world. Who loveth not the company of his dearest friends and brethren more than of strangers or enemies? We know, those that fear God are like to be our companions for ever, and therefore we would have them our companions here. You may see by Scripture that it is thus with true Christians. "In his eyes a vile person is contemned, but he honoureth them that fear God<sup>l</sup>." "They take sweet counsel together, and walk to the house of God in company<sup>m</sup>." "They that feared the Lord, spake often one to another<sup>n</sup>, &c." "I am a companion," saith David, "of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts<sup>o</sup>." And it is one of the Hebrews' commendations, that they "became companions of them that suffered for Christ<sup>p</sup>." And on the contrary side, it was feigned to be one of Job's iniquities, to go in company with the workers of iniquity<sup>q</sup>. For men are supposed to be such as their company is; and we are commanded with such, no, not to eat<sup>r</sup>. And "to have no company with them, that they may be ashamed<sup>s</sup>." And Solomon saith, "A companion of fools shall be destroyed<sup>t</sup>."

6. Another part of the change of the life is this, true conversion makes a man compassionate to those that are unconverted, and very desirous of their conversion, and therefore sets men upon such endeavours as they can use to bring it to pass; yea, it makes men zealous of good works<sup>u</sup>, and very careful and studious to do what good they can. It is the disposition of wicked men to draw others with them into wickedness, and to make others as bad as themselves: "They not only do that which is evil, but have pleasure in them that do it<sup>x</sup>." They would have others as loose as they, and as careless of their own souls as they, and to make as light a matter of sin as they do. The drunkard would have companions, and the gamester would have companions; every one that hates and derides a godly life, would have all others do so too. Men are loath to go to hell alone; but like men that are running violently down a hill, they draw

<sup>l</sup> Psalm xv. 4.<sup>o</sup> Psalm cxix. 63.<sup>r</sup> 1 Cor. v. 11.<sup>u</sup> Tit. ii. 19.<sup>m</sup> Psalm lv. 14.<sup>p</sup> Heb. x. 33.<sup>s</sup> 2 Thess. iii. 14.<sup>x</sup> Rom. i. 32.<sup>n</sup> Mal. iii. 16.<sup>q</sup> Job xxxiv. 8.<sup>t</sup> Prov. xiii. 20.

one another with them. It somewhat comforts them to see most of the world as bad as themselves, because they think then God will not condemn so many : as if the number of sinners did extenuate the wrong. And those unconverted men that are not so bad as to wish others as bad as themselves, yet have little zeal for men's recovery : for how can they love other men better than themselves ?

But when conversion hath given a man a sight and sense of the evil of sin, it makes him pity all that are misled, and earnestly desire their conversion and recovery. O how fain would the gracious soul have others to see the folly of sin, as he hath seen it ! How fain would he have them see the need of Christ, that glory above, that felicity that lieth in the favour of God, as he hath seen them ! It doth him good to have companions in good : he hath no mind to be happy alone. The number of partakers he knows will not at all diminish his joys. If he could tell how, he would have all the world to be as happy as himself, the more the better. And therefore he prayeth heartily for the conversion of other men : he pleadeth with them, and persuadeth them ; and fain he would have their eyes to be opened, and their hearts to be softened and turned to God. He remembereth that their case was once his own, and how foolish and froward he was, even as they now are ! He remembereth how miserable he then was, though he knew it not, and would not for all the world be in the same case again ; and therefore he cannot choose but pity those that he hath left behind him, and long for their deliverance.

Truly, sinners, it is from hence that men fearing God do trouble you so much in your sins, and make such a stir with you about matters of your souls ; and tell you of your danger, and persuade you to turn, and take another course : it is because they are loath to see you perish, if they could help it. You would have them let you alone, but they are loath to let you alone, in such a case and way as that. If some that are running to drown themselves, or do any mischief to themselves, should bid you let them alone, and meddle with yourselves, and take no care for them, you would not let them alone for all that, but would hinder them if you could from making away with themselves. So, if you are angry with men that would keep you out of hell, and bid



them let you alone, and take no care for you, because you shall answer for yourselves, this will not satisfy them to stand still, and see you run into damnation, if they knew how to help it. Alas ! it is not because they love to be meddling with other folks' matters, or take pleasure in reprovng and controlling other men. If it were not for your sakes and the glory of God, it is easier for us to let you alone. We have work enough of our own to do, and dangers enough of our own to prevent. It is small pleasure to any man that is well in his wits to meddle needlessly with other men's matters, and to contradict wilful sinners, when he knows how little thanks he is like to have for it. What do you think we long to have men hate us and fly in our faces ? Is it a pleasure to us to vex men, and make them our enemies ? No. Alas ! it is so great a displeasure, that it becomes a strong temptation to us to be unfaithful or negligent in our duty. Many a minister is so loath to get the ill will of his people, that he lets them alone in their sins, or only telleth them of it in public, or at the most but in an easy, ineffectual way, and so falls in danger of perishing with them for company. Nothing makes more negligent, unconscionable ministers, (next to the unfaithfulness of their own hearts,) than people's hating their instructions and reproofs, and impatiently bearing the means that should recover them. Carnal ministers will not cast themselves upon the people's displeasure, but rather let them alone and venture them. They that dare venture their own souls to escape the ill will of men, will venture other men's too. And so it is also with private Christians. The reason why so few will be brought to deal plainly and faithfully for the saving of others, is because it is commonly so ill taken. Alas ! sinners, what ease, what profit, what good is it, think you, to other men to trouble you in your sins, if it were not for your good, and for the command and glory of God ? But what man that is not a tyger, or hath not a heart of stone within a little of damnation, and let them alone ? Who can be so cruel as to hold his tongue, while he seeth men in the highway to hell ? If we were yet in our unbelief, and did not believe that the word of God is true, or that unconverted men shall certainly perish, then we might well be silent ; for who would go to make men sad with melancholy fancies or

fearful dreams that have no truth in them? But O! do not blame a man that hath been in the same condition himself, and is mercifully delivered by converting grace, if he look back to those he hath left behind, and tell them of their danger! Do not blame a man that hath his eyes opened by faith, and seeth hell-fire a little before you, if he should call to you, and call again, and call with tears and greatest earnestness, to entreat you to stop, and go no further. I dare say, if you did but see what he seeth, you would be of the same mind, and would be as loath to go on in an unconverted condition, as any one would be to suffer you. When the eyes of sinners are shut that they see not their own condition, nor what a storm is rising in heaven against them, they are content and quiet at the gates of hell! But when either grace or torments have opened their eyes, the case will be quite changed with them. Well, this is certain, that whenever God converteth the soul, he maketh men very desirous of other men's conversion, and very compassionate to them that are yet in darkness and in bondage by their sins. Not only Paul and the preachers of the Gospel say, "Necessity is laid upon me, and woe unto me if I preach not the Gospel;" but every Christian in his place doth find a necessity upon him to endeavour the good of others; and he findeth an earnest desire to it, and a delight in that which God hath made so necessary. And it is not in this matter of conversion only, but in all other things also, that a true Christian hath a special inclination to do good. As he that is evil, delighteth to do evil; so he that is good, delighteth to do good. Though he be not perfectly good, for so is none till he come to heaven; much less primitively, and of himself good, for so there is none good but God<sup>y</sup>. Yet hath he a derived, an imperfect goodness, and in that measure as he is good, he must needs be prone to do good; for every thing will work according to its nature. It is a death to wicked men to do that which is a godly man's delight. A man or beast cannot fly in the air, but a bird can do it as easily as we can walk on the earth. A good man is never in his own element, but when he is doing some good. His mind runneth on it: he studieth how he may effect it; and he is not content to do good, unless he do much good. He knoweth

<sup>y</sup> Matt. xix. 17.

what Christ hath said ; “ Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit <sup>z</sup>. ” He findeth by experience that which others will not believe, that doing good is either a receiving of good, or inseparably conjunct with it. The more a man giveth to the poor or to other good uses, with right intents, the more he receiveth. Whatever others receive by his endeavours, he is sure that he shall not lose his labour or cost, as to himself. “ He that giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord ; ” and look what he layeth out, it shall be paid him again. A carnal man is ever selfish, and draws all to him, as if there were no one but himself that he cared for : but a gracious man is in his place and measure like God, a communicative good. As “ God is good and doth good <sup>a</sup>, ” so is he. That which a man’s nature inclineth him to, he cannot forget. A good man forgets not in the main to do good, for he knoweth that with such sacrifice God is well pleased <sup>b</sup>. Mark this all you that profess more zeal for God than others : believe it, true conversion will appear in good works. The true servants of Christ do as much exceed the world in a contempt of earthly things, and in compassion to the miserable, and in readiness and bounty, according to their ability to those that want, as they do exceed them in praying, or other duties. Other men part with the world as their treasure, and almost as their blood, but the heavenly Christian parteth with it as his superfluity, or at least as that which he can spare. Faith teacheth men to do good ; and good works are part of the riches of a saint <sup>c</sup>. Doing good is so excellent and necessary a thing, that even an enemy must be made partaker of it <sup>d</sup>. And want of thankfulness or requital from men, is no excuse to them that neglect it <sup>e</sup>. Some works of piety may be forborn for doing good to others <sup>f</sup>.

So much for that part of the change.

<sup>z</sup> John xv. 8.

<sup>a</sup> Psal. cxix. 68.

<sup>b</sup> Heb. xiii. 16.

<sup>c</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 18.

<sup>d</sup> Matt. v. 44.

<sup>e</sup> Luke vi. 35.

<sup>f</sup> Mark iii. 4.



## CHAPTER II.

I HAVE spoken of the work of conversion, as it containeth the change of the judgment, and of the heart, and of the life, and so have finished the third particular promised : which was to shew you what conversion is, and wherein it doth consist. By what is said, you may easily see that it is a great change that is made on the soul and in the life, by this renewing grace of Christ. Methinks now all those men that know, or may know, that never such a work was wrought upon their hearts, should see that it is time to look about them, and to lay to heart the sad conclusion, which Christ hath here protested in my text. What ! have all the people of this congregation found all this change upon judgment, heart, and life, as I have here spoken of? O that it were so well. What a joy were that to us, to angels, to Christ himself ! And what everlasting joy would that be to themselves ! But, alas ! their conversations and careless lives do tell us, that with too many of them it is far otherwise. And what keepeth such guilty souls in peace ? Can so many men hear such a text as this ; that except they be converted they cannot be saved, and yet not look about them, nor be awakened from their security ? Yet it is too evident by sad experience, that they that read this and know, or might know, that they are not converted, are yet as careless as if they could endure damnation well enough. And what is the matter ? And how comes this to pass ? Doubtless, because they do not thoroughly believe the truth of what is said.

IV. I shall therefore come now to the next thing promised : briefly to shew you from the word of God the certain truth of what we have in hand, that you may see it is a matter past all doubt and question.

1. And first, What need you any more than the very words of the text ? Do you need further proof, where you have the words of Christ himself ? But you shall see yet more, John iii. 3. He telleth Nicodemus, " That except a man be regenerate and born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven : " that is, as a child is as it were a new creature that lately received life, which had none before, and newly entereth into the world ; so must every man that will

be saved, as it were receive a new spiritual life, and enter into the world of grace, even into the church of God, and begin his life as it were again; "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." See here both the necessity, and the nature of this change. It is not one or two, but every man that is in Christ, that is thus converted. And he that is not in Christ, is not a Christian, and he that is not a Christian cannot be saved. Every true Christian then is a new creature; not in substance, but in quality and in life; "old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new!" What are these 'all things?' but those that I have before expressed to you? A true converted man, hath not the same ends and intentions that he had before: he hath a new hope and happiness, new love, new desires, new sorrow, new delight, new resolution, and a new conversation: all is become new. He entereth a new covenant with Christ, and so he hath a new master, a new head, and husband and Lord: and is now a member of a new society, and entereth into a new kingdom and family. He hath a new work to do, he hath a new company to converse with, he hath new thoughts in his heart, and speaks a new language. He leadeth his life by a new law: and thus all things are become new. Even relations are here included, as well as physical qualifications. For he hath a new Father, a new inheritance, and so of the rest. It must needs be a great change indeed, where all things are become new. If it were but one or two of these, it would make a great alteration; much more when it is in all. So in 1 Pet. ii. 2. The apostle likeneth them to "new born babes, who must therefore desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may live and grow by it." And in Gal. vi. 15. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. The world must be crucified to us, and we to the world, that we may live anew to God." ver. 14. And I told you before out of Ephes. iv. 22—24. That in conversion we "put off the old man, which according to the deceitful lusts, is corrupt; and are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." And Tit. iii. 5. "According to his mercy he saved us by the washing

of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he sheddeth on us, through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." So Col. iii. 10. "We put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created us." Ezek. xviii. 31. He commandeth them to "make them a new heart, and a new spirit." And what he commandeth all, he declareth himself resolved to give to his elect. Ezek. xxxvi. 26. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put into you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh; and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." So in Ezek. xi. 19. "I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh; that they may walk in my statutes, and keep my ordinances, and do them, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." And as they are new creatures, so they have a new commandment, or law to live by; and a new promise, or covenant for their inheritance<sup>b</sup>. They have a "new name, that no man knoweth but he that hath it<sup>c</sup>:" or at least they shall have. They have "new employments, even serving God in newness of life, that as they were planted together in the likeness of Christ's death, they should be also in the likeness of his resurrection. Knowing this, that their old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth they should not serve sin. For he that is dead is justified or freed from sin<sup>d</sup>." And thus they "serve God in newness of spirit<sup>e</sup>." And so the whole church is "one new man in Christ<sup>f</sup>." And a "new lump that is purged from the old leaven," must all particular churches of Christians be<sup>g</sup>. But lest any doubt should be left, I will reduce the rest to some particular arguments.

1. It is the very office of Jesus Christ, which he came into the world to perform, to bring back ungodly sinners unto God. And shall we think that Christ came on a needless errand? Believe it, sirs, as his suffering was ne-

<sup>b</sup> John xiii. 34. Luke xxii. 20. 2 Cor. iii. 6. Heb. ix. 15.

<sup>c</sup> Rev. ii. 17.

<sup>d</sup> Rom. vi. 4—7.

<sup>e</sup> Rom. vii. 6.

<sup>f</sup> Ephes. ii. 15.

<sup>g</sup> 1 Cor. v. 7.



cessary for our ransom, so was his doctrine and Spirit as necessary for our conversion, and we can no more be saved without the one, than without the other. Think with yourselves whether it be a likely thing, that God should send his Son on earth by a miracle, surpassing all miracles, and this on purpose to call home straying sinful souls, if they might be saved without conversion? If it had been possible for men to be happy without holiness, and to escape misery without escaping sin, what need Christ have come to sanctify them? The Lord Jesus is the great Physician of souls, and he comes not to heal any petty diseases, that might as well have been healed without him; but he comes to cure a killing plague, that no one else could have cured but himself. It was never the mind of Christ to come down from heaven to suffer for our sins, that we might be saved in them without a change. Never did it enter into his holy thoughts, to bring men to glory in their sins; but to destroy their sins that would keep them out of glory. He never meant to bring you and your disease to heaven together; but to heal your disease, that else would be your ruin. What shall we think, that Christ came to impute a righteousness to the impenitent and unconverted? And to make God believe that they are just in him, who are not in him at all? And to make men seem to be what they are not? Why, this were to fain the blessed Son of God to be the patron of iniquity, and to die for the upholding of sin; and not for the destroying of it. What greater blasphemy against Christ can there be, than to imagine that he befriendeth sin, which he doth so hate? And that he taketh part with satan, and strengtheneth his kingdom, when it was his very business in the world to destroy it, and his works<sup>h</sup>? What must Christ come, and so miraculously condescend and do, and suffer what he did, and all to heal diseased souls, and kill that sin that else would kill them, and after all this, shall he be made the patron of it? Take this home with thee to thy heart, unconverted sinner, whoever thou art. If men could have been saved without conversion, Christ would never have done so much to convert them as he hath done. You comfort yourselves in Christ, while you live in wilful sinning; and you think that though you be not renewed, yet you shall be pardoned and

<sup>h</sup> 1 John iii. 8.

saved by his blood-shed. Why, I tell you from the word of God, you may fetch much terror from the thoughts of Christ; but hope of salvation without conversion he will afford you none. You may rather think with yourselves, that if the changing of a sinner had not been a work of great necessity, Christ would never have come down to do it. I know that we have free pardon of sin by his blood, or else we had no hope; but it is none but the converted that partake of that pardon, as you may see, Mark iv. 12. "Lest at any time they be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them." So Acts xxvi. 18. iii. 9. "Repent ye therefore, that your sins may be blotted out." If you had but that one chapter, Luke xv. to tell you in what manner Christ doth save men, you might easily see, it is not by bringing them to heaven in their ungodliness. He likeneth himself to one that having lost a sheep in the wilderness, goeth and seeketh after it, till he find it. And when he hath found it, (what, doth he leave it? no, but) layeth it on his shoulders, and bringeth it home rejoicing; ver. 4, 5. Or like one that sweepeth the house to find a piece of silver that was lost; ver. 8. Or like the father that gladly receiveth the returning prodigal. But without returning, there had been no receiving him, nor any rejoicing over him.

*Object.* But doth not Christ tell us of some that needed no repentance? ver. 7. *Ans.* True, why is that? Because they had truly repented before. They needed no conversion; or such conversion as the new converts have, which consists in a change, from a state of sin to God: but only a proceeding in obedience, and particular repentance for their particular slips. But if they had not been converted before, they would have needed such a conversion or repentance. For so the prophet saith, Isa. liii. 6. "All we like sheep have gone astray, and have turned every one to his own way." And so, 1 Pet. ii. 25. "For ye were as sheep going astray, but are returned to the shepherd and bishop of your souls." Or if there be any that were sanctified in their infancy, as no doubt there is, so that their actual going astray was prevented; yet as they went astray in Adam and their parents, so had they a straying disposition in their corrupted natures, which needeth a turn, as well as the sins, which appear in the life. And thus it

appeareth that Christ came of purpose to convert men, and not to pardon any soul without conversion. “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost<sup>i</sup>.” “Who gave himself for us (not to pardon us, and to save without converting us, but) to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works<sup>k</sup>.” So that hence you may see the absolute necessity of conversion to salvation.

2. It is the very drift of the Gospel, and main design of the whole word of God, to convert men from sin to God, and build them up when they are once converted. And do you think that God would have made it the scope of his word, if it had not been necessary? If a man could be saved without conversion, what need God to inspire prophets and apostles to deliver his word to the world, and to seal it with the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, and all to convert men, and build up the converted? Would God make all this stir with us, as he doth in the Bible, for a needless thing? Alas! if he did not know that your disease will kill you except it be cured, he would never have prepared so many remedies against it. This is the very use and glory of the law of God. “The law of God is pure, converting the soul<sup>l</sup>.” What else doth Scripture call sinners to, but to repent and turn to God by Christ. “As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel<sup>m</sup>.” “But if the wicked shall turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God; and not that he should turn from his ways and live? Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby you have transgressed, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; wherefore turn yourselves and

<sup>i</sup> Luke xix. 10.<sup>k</sup> Tit. ii. 14.<sup>l</sup> Psal. xix. 7.<sup>m</sup> Ezek. xxxiii. 11.



live ye<sup>n</sup>." So Ezek. xiv. 6. iii. 18—21. Isa. xxxi. 6. lix. 20, 21. Jer. iii. 7, 14. xviii. 8. xxvi. 3. Prov. i. 23. "Turn ye at my reproofs, and I will pour out my Spirit unto you;" Hos. v. 4. xii. 6. Joel ii. 12. "Turn ye to me with all your hearts, with fasting, and weeping, and mourning; rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God; Jonah iii. 8. An hundred such places might be brought in which it is apparent, that the turning of sinners to God, is the main scope of the holy Scriptures.

3. It is as certain, that it is the very business that the ministers of the gospel are appointed to, to convert men to God by the faith of Jesus Christ. And is it likely that God would send us to trouble the world with a needless work? For my part, if I did not know that repentance and conversion are absolutely necessary to the glory of God's grace and saving of the sinner, I should be loath to trouble myself and others so much about such matters as I do. Who could find in his heart to study, and preach, and weary himself, and vex the world, and call men to such unwelcome duties, and preach to them such unpleasant truths, and set them upon works that are so hard to flesh and blood, and put them upon so many sufferings in the world, if all this were for a needless thing? John Baptist began to preach repentance; Christ followed him in preaching repentance, and tells them, "except they repent, they shall all perish<sup>o</sup>." The apostles follow him in preaching the same repentance, as that without which there is no salvation<sup>p</sup>. They tell us, "God commandeth all men every where to repent<sup>q</sup>." Paul's business was, "to shew all men that they must repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance<sup>r</sup>." And "to open men's eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and the power of satan to God, that they may receive remission of sins, and an inheritance among the sanctified by faith in Christ<sup>s</sup>." As Christ himself came to "call sinners to repentance<sup>t</sup>," so doth he send his ministers on the same errand; and after all his sufferings, he will give men pardon on no other terms. But "repentance and remission of sins must be preached in his name among all nations<sup>u</sup>." Mark

<sup>n</sup> Ezek. xviii. 23, 30—32.

<sup>q</sup> Acts xvii. 30.

<sup>t</sup> Matt. ix. 13.

<sup>o</sup> Luke xiii. 3, 5.

<sup>r</sup> Acts xxvi. 20.

<sup>u</sup> Luke xxiv. 46, 47.

<sup>p</sup> Acts ii. 38. viii. 22.

<sup>s</sup> Acts xxvi. 18.

the way of gospel-preaching and salvation: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins<sup>x</sup>" Repentance in order before forgiveness. When men turn from sin, God turneth from his punishing wrath; but not before. God hath "granted to the gentiles repentance unto life<sup>y</sup>." The sum of Paul's doctrine was, "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ<sup>z</sup>." For this do God's ministers "instruct in meekness them that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will<sup>a</sup>;" and 2 Pet. iii. 9. it is said, that "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;" which plainly implieth, that if they come not to repentance, they must perish for all that. And therefore repentance is one of the fundamentals, and preaching repentance is laying the foundation, as appeareth, Heb. vi. 1. And he that is grown incurable, and remediless by apostasy, is said to be one that "cannot be renewed by repentance<sup>b</sup>." Which supposeth that there can be no other way of renewing. And a desperate man is one that "findeth no place for repentance<sup>c</sup>." And in the godly, all the fruits of holiness are made the "fruits of repentance<sup>d</sup>."

4. The very providence of God in mercy and affliction, are purposely to bring sinners to repentance. And therefore certainly, "Repentance is necessary to salvation<sup>e</sup>." "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up to thy self wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God<sup>f</sup>." If conversion were not necessary to salvation, God would not make so much ado by affliction and mercy to bring us to it.

<sup>x</sup> Acts v. 30, 31.<sup>y</sup> Acts xi. 18.<sup>z</sup> Acts xx. 21.<sup>a</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26.<sup>b</sup> Heb. vi. 6.<sup>c</sup> Heb. xii. 17.<sup>d</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 9—11.<sup>e</sup> Rom. ii. 4.<sup>f</sup> Rev. ix. 20. xvi. 9, 11.

5. God makes it the duty even of every man in his place, to do all that he can for the conversion of others: and this he would never do, if there were another way to salvation. “They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever<sup>f</sup>.” James saith, “If any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know, that he that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and cover a multitude of sins<sup>g</sup>.” And David promiseth, if God would pardon and restore him, that he “will teach transgressors his way, that sinners may be converted to him<sup>h</sup>.” So that, lay all this now together, and judge whether it be likely that God would have set all the world on work for the conversion of sinners, if there had been any other way to save them. Should Christ himself have come upon this errand? Should the word of God be written to this end? Should all the prophets, apostles, and ministers of the Gospel be sent on this message? Should all mercies, and all afflictions be directed to this use? Should it be made the duty of every Christian to endeavour it? If men could be saved without conversion, by any other way? Doubtless the case is plain, it should not be.

I beseech you therefore, let this be received by you as an unquestionable truth: make no halt or doubt in the business; shift it not off with foolish cavils; but ground it even in the bottom of your heart, that without true conversion, there is no hope of salvation.

You have as good proof of it as you can desire of any truth in the world. Yea, besides all that I have said, it is a thing that in general is confessed by heathens, and discerned even by the light of nature. They that will not believe in Christ, will confess the necessity of repentance and reformation, which yet cannot be wrought without faith in Christ. Though I know there is a great deal more necessary to this work, yet I should think I had done something to-day, if you would but all go home resolved without all doubt of the truth of my text: and would never more think that there is any other way to salvation, besides conversion. For certainly, if you were once well resolved, that you must every man of you be con-

<sup>f</sup> Dan. xii. 3.<sup>g</sup> James v. 19, 20.<sup>h</sup> Psal. li. 13.



verted, or condemned, you would look a little better about you than most do. At least this would destroy your deceiving hopes and presumption, and make you see what is yet to be done, and would much help to prepare you for a further work. And that none of you may say another day, that you never heard or knew the truth, I do here solemnly proclaim it to you all in the name of Christ, that there is no hope of salvation without true conversion. And I have fully proved it to you from the word of God. So that if ever a man or woman that is here before the Lord this day, shall yet dare to live in an unconverted state, you are left without a cloak for your sin. You shall not be able to tell the Lord at judgment, that you never heard or knew so much. If he ask any of you at that day, how it came to pass that you turned not to God, nor sought after converting grace, and how you could ever think to look God in the face without conversion? you shall not be able to say, 'We lived under a minister that never told us of it; we thought we might have done well enough without it, and some particular repentance might have served the turn.' The truth hath shone this day in your eyes: you have heard what Christ saith, and what his apostles say, and what is the drift of all the Scripture. If yet you will believe that a man may be saved without conversion, it is your wilful obstinacy and unbelief that maketh you think it: you must wink hard, and draw the curtains of carnal security about your ears, if in the midst of this day-light you will sleep as in the night of former darkness.

*Quest.* But are there not many in the world that need no conversion, even from their infancy? Doth not God regenerate men by baptism, or at least before, which baptism sealeth; or at least by Christian education in their infancy? And what need have these of after conversion?

*Ans.* To this I shall answer briefly, but plainly, in these propositions following: 1. No doubt but God doth pardon original sin to multitudes of infants by the blood of Christ, through the covenant of grace, which is made to the faithful, and their seed. And being thus pardoned, they may be truly said to be new creatures, or regenerate relatively. And this pardon bestowed by the covenant, is sealed by baptism, which solemnly conferreth it. 2. It is most

probable that God doth also make some change on the hearts of infants, secretly giving them some seed of inward grace before, or in their baptism. 3. It is certain, that sometimes before their death, he doth give this Spirit to elect infants, according to their capacity, and thereby fit them for glory. I mean those that die in infancy. 4. Holy education of parents may be a means through God's blessing, of actual converting those that were before but semi-nally changed, yea, and of those that were not. And if parents did their duty first in a believing dedication of their children to God by baptism, and then in a careful bringing them up in his fear; it is most certain, that this would be the most ordinary age and season of regeneration and sanctification to life. For God would not be wanting to his own ordinances used in faith by his own people. He did not appoint them in vain, neither hath he given them a precept without a promise. 5. If any one did receive the seed of true grace in their infancy, it will certainly appear in a holy life, even from their infancy upwards. And therefore there is the same work done in the hearts of such as were converted in infancy, and after were brought up in the fear of God, as I have before described to you in the truly converted. If any man did but live one year, or month, or week of his childhood after he had the use of reason, in a state utterly graceless, that man hath no reason to take the least comfort now to himself, upon any conceit that he was regenerate in his infancy. If he have from his childhood unfeignedly loved God above all, and been heavenly-minded, and hated sin, and delighted in all holiness, and feared God, and repented of all known sin, and laboured to subdue it, and had the rest of the marks of grace in his heart, then he may be sure that he was sanctified betime. But if any man have lived to the world or the flesh but one month, since his infant state, never minding the life to come, nor loving the holy ways of God, nor hating iniquity, he may be sure that he must have another conversion, than any he had in his infancy, or it will not serve his turn for heaven. An infant-conversion may serve for an infant state of salvation; but he that hath after that lived to sin, must have an actual conversion, as he was actually a sinner. And if he had grace in infancy, he must have the same working of it

toward God and heaven, which in the work of conversion I described before. So that I do not call you to judge of your state by the time or manner of your change, so much as by the matter or thing itself. Find all that work upon your judgments, heart, and life, which I have before laid down, and be sure it is there, and then, whensoever you came by it, you are happy. But if it be not now there, it is a silly delusion, to glory in the conceits of an infant-baptismal change. Yet I doubt not but there is many a true Christian, who hath received this grace so early, that they have the greater cause to be for ever thankful for it to God.

So much for the confirmation of the point. That certainly this work of conversion is necessary to all that will be saved. One time or other the image of God must be imprinted on the heart, and in those at age expressed in the life.

11. I am next, according to the method propounded, to give you the reasons of it. Why a man cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven except he be converted. The case is so clear, that we may easily see reason for it, if we be willing to see.

1. If there were no other reason apparent to us but the word of God, one would think it might satisfy such as we. Heaven is his own, and he may give it to whom he will, and he hath told us in his word, that he will give it to no other, and should not that suffice us? May not he do with his own as he list? It is his hand that must set on the crown; and may not he set it on what head he please? We are sure of these two things: 1. That God hath full power to dispose of it, and therefore can do no wrong to others by denying it. 2. And that he is infinitely wise, and good, and just, and therefore it must needs be the wisest and best way that he takes, though such dark sinners as we could not see the wisdom, or the goodness, or justice of it. Do you grudge at this doctrine, that none shall be saved but those who are converted? Why, then you grudge at God. And do you think indeed that he knoweth not what he doth? Are you wiser than he? or are you more righteous than he? What! must the God of heaven come down to you to learn wisdom, or justice, or mercy? Will you question him at the bar of judgment, and ask him why he doth



so? Will you charge him with injustice, or unmercifulness, and say, ' Lord, why art thou so unmerciful as to condemn all the unconverted? O poor fools! (for so I dare call you that dare so far presume) how easily will God answer you, and justify his wisdom, his justice, and his mercy. It is a fine world, when the Creator must be judged at the bar of a silly creature! What! if a fly or a flea could speak, should it expostulate the case with God, that he made him not a man? or should a toad, or a snake, reprove him of injustice for making him such, that never had sinned? or tell him that this is an act of unmercifulness? How much less should a wretched sinner, that hath done so much wrong to the Lord that made him, that hath refused his grace by which he would have saved him, presume to open his mouth against God, and tell him after all this, that if he condemn him, he is unmerciful. But more of this anon.

Sirs, I tell you my religion, and my resolution. I believe all that God saith to be true, though the matter were never so much beyond my reach. And of this I am so confident, that I will venture my soul upon it. I have looked up and down to see if there be any better and surer grounds for a wise man to venture his happiness upon, and I can find no better: nay, I am sure there is no better. If any man have found any better, let him take it, and make his boast of the gain when he hath it. For my part, I will take God's word, and I will trust my soul and hopes on this, and I will look for satisfaction of all my doubts and scruples, when I come to possess the promised felicity. And I am sure I can lose nothing, or no great matter by this resolution. For sure I am that all other happiness is a shadow and delusion: and all other foundations are sandy, and will deceive. If God tell me in his word, that "no man shall be saved except he be converted," I will take his word, and let them look well to their standing that do refuse it. I will set this word of God against all the reasons in the world that you can bring. Well, you say it is a hard saying, that so few should be saved: will you say you cannot believe that God will deal so hardly? Against all these vain cavils I set the word of God. God hath said it, and will he not do it?

2. Well, but if we must needs go farther to reasoning the case with you, and God's word will not satisfy you,

will proceed to shew you some nearer reasons from the nature of the thing. And the first of these reasons shall be from the nature of God's government, and the state of men in this present life. We are set here as in the way to a further end. God never intended that this should be our home, nor that we should have the victory without a combat, nor the crown without the victory. God never meant that we should have the wages of his glory, how free soever, without a faithful performing of our work; at least the work of unfeigned repentance and conversion. Would you have God reward men for serving the devil? Or to say at the last day, 'Come, sinner, thou hast lived to the devil all thy life, and set thy heart on the world, and abused or despised me and my grace, enter now into the promised glory.' Why, sinners, if self-love did not blind you, and make fools of you, you could tell that this were a sentence unfit for the most wise and righteous God. What! must he reward the devil's servants? Shall not the Judge of all the world do righteously<sup>i</sup>? And what is righteousness, but to give every man his due? And is not punishment naturally due to the disobedient? Especially when they have refused, or set light by a pardon. Sirs, the case is plain. A wise and righteous governor, let him be never so merciful, must make a difference between the righteous and the wicked. And therefore God will so do. "A righteous judge must pass sentence according to the law<sup>k</sup>." Tell me, would you think well of that governor, that should let men rob you, or beat you, or violently take possession of your house or land, and never punish him? And will you think that God will put up infinitely greater injury at your hands? Would you like such a law, that shall bid all men steal, and kill, and spare not, for the judge will not be so cruel as to hang or punish them? I think you would say, this were but a foolish and unmerciful judge, that pretended thus to be merciful. Do not then for shame impute this folly and unrighteousness to God. If he should not have made righteous laws, which threaten punishment to sin, for the restraining of it, how should the world be governed? And if he should make laws, and never execute them, how should he be wise and righteous? He is not so weak as to be put to govern the world by mere deceit. It

<sup>i</sup> Gen. xviii. 25.<sup>k</sup> Mal. iii. 18.

belongeth to a righteous governor, to see that it go well with the good, and ill with the bad; ‘ut bonis bene sit, et malis male.’ And I think if God should deal so well with the worst as with the best, your own reason would be ready to question it. Why, what can he do more to the best, than to save them in his glory, for what more are they capable of? And should he do this also to the worst? And sure, if he must shut them out of glory, they must need be in misery. For if there were no more, but to look towards the happiness which they so lost, and see Lazarus in Abraham’s bosom, and the righteous whom they derided, possessing that glory which they set light by, it must needs fill their minds with anguish and vexation; and their own consciences would torment them for ever. Well, you see then some reason why the unconverted should not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

3. But further consider this. The holy nature of God will not permit the unclean and unholy soul in his presence. “There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, or whatsoever worketh abomination<sup>1</sup>.” “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity<sup>m</sup>.” “For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight, thou hatest all the workers of iniquity. The righteous Lord loveth righteousness; but the wicked his soul hateth<sup>n</sup>” “Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous<sup>o</sup>.” “For God shall judge the world in righteousness, and minister judgment to the people in uprightness. And he is known by the judgment which he executeth, when the wicked is snared in the work of his own hand. So that the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God<sup>p</sup>.” ‘What reason would you have more? There is a contradiction between the nature of God and the unconverted. “What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness<sup>q</sup>?” Therefore it is that God also putteth an “enmity between the seed of the woman, and of the serpent<sup>r</sup>.” And

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xxi. 27.

<sup>o</sup> Psal. i. 5.

<sup>r</sup> Gen. iii. 15.

<sup>m</sup> Hab. i. 13.

<sup>p</sup> Psal. ix. 8. 16, 17.

<sup>n</sup> Psal. v. 4. xi. 5.

<sup>q</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 14.



calleth his converted people to come out from the impenitent unbelieving world; not by a schismatical, but by a godly separation. "For what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord; and touch not the unclean thing; and he will receive you, and be a father to you<sup>s</sup>." If God himself could endure communion with the unholy, then he would allow his people to endure it. But because they are his, and must be like him, therefore must they withdraw from such. Sinners, I pray you judge as you would be judged of. Would you have communion yourselves with that which is against your nature? Would you be tied to feed upon toads or snakes, or to put them in your bosom, or lay them in bed with you? or if a toad could speak, would it be a reasonable argument to say, Why art thou so unmerciful as to refuse my company or thus to abhor me, and cast me away? Why, the holy nature of God is infinitely more against unholy sinners, as such, than your nature is against the most venomous toad. And therefore he cannot admit the unconverted into his kingdom. Therefore it is, that he will redeem and sanctify them, and cleanse them from their sin, that they may be presented spotless and unblamable to him by Christ, before they shall come to glory<sup>t</sup>. Believe it, sinners, light and darkness, holiness and unholiness, God and sin, are utterly unreconcilable. If ever God and you must live together in glory, you must become holy as he is holy, that you may be such as he can dwell withal, and delight in. Either he must turn unholy like you, or you must turn holy like him. And which do you think is the more likely to be done? Can you expect that the Sun of righteousness should turn dark to comply with your darkness? or that the immutable God should lay by his excellency, to suit himself with your vileness? Why, this were for God to cease to be God. For to be an unholy God, is to be an evil God, and this is to be no God. For to be God, is to be the chiefest good. See

<sup>s</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 14—16.<sup>t</sup> Ephes. v. 26, 27.

then what a fair issue the carnal reasonings, and confident hopes of wicked men have. They hope to be saved without conversion and holiness. And the issue is this, they hope that God will cease to be God, lest they should be damned and shut out of his kingdom. Do not say I make worse of your reasoning than it is. The case is plain, it is no better. And I appeal to thy own conscience, whether the brains of a man be capable of greater madness. O sirs, what a befooling thing is sin! Is it not more reasonable that thou shouldst cease to be ungodly, than that God should cease his blessed nature? There is some possibility yet that thou mayst cease to be a wilful impenitent sinner. But there is no possibility that God should cease to be God. Woe to thee, if thou cast thy soul upon such hopes. Should God cease his goodness and blessed perfection, all the world would be confounded, or turn to nothing. Turn, therefore, for be sure of it, he will not turn to thee. He hath commanded his servants, that they come not one jot nearer the wicked. "Let them return to thee, but return not thou to them." And will he then do that which he forbiddeth his servants? Many a sinner hath thought that God is like himself, even of his mind, and thought as lightly of sin as they, Psal. l. But they never found it so in the end. He did, by wonderful incomprehensible condescension, become man to save sinners, but he will never become a sinner to save sinners; nor unholy to save the unholy. He took our flesh, and he took our curse, and in that sense became sin for us, who knew no sin; but he will never take to him sin itself. He is yet reconcilable to sinners, but he will never be reconcilable to sin. Yet, if thou wilt turn to him, thou mayst be welcome; but never look he should turn like thee!

4. And do you not yet see reason enough, why no unconverted sinner should be saved? Why come along with me, and I will shew you yet more. God offered them salvation in this life, for the very taking. I may well say upon easy and reasonable terms, when it was no more but accept it, and have it; and they would not. It was propounded to their choice, and they refused it. They might have had Christ, and pardon, and holiness, and happiness if they would, and

they would not: and would you have God to save them, whether they will or no? He set life and death before them, and bids them choose life, that they might live<sup>x</sup>. He set before them blessing and cursing, and denounced to them, that they should certainly perish if their hearts turned away, and they would not hear. He called heaven and earth to record against them<sup>y</sup>: and he sent his Son, his apostles to them, to entreat them, and in his name to beseech them to turn to him, and to be reconciled<sup>z</sup>; he charged us to be “instant with them, in season, and out of season<sup>a</sup>,” and “to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine;” as suitors that would take no nay. He bids us even “compel them to come in<sup>b</sup>,” and yet they would not come, we could not prevail. Some would make excuses from one thing, and some from another: some had their farms, and some their trades, and some their wives, and all their sins to regard; they could not have while to be converted and fear God: and some set light by us and our message<sup>c</sup>: and some did openly oppose it, and contradicting the truth and cavilling at it, as if they were wiser than to be converted and saved; as if they had more reason than to come in to God that called them, and accept of his salvation; and therefore even scorned the Holy word and way of God, that should have saved them. Sirs, to our heart’s grief we must witness it against the face of thousands of our poor hearers, that this was the true case, and thus things were carried between God and them: Christ called out to them when he was on earth, even with tears, and bids us do the like with tears now in his stead. “Oh, that thou hadst known at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace!” but they would not, till they were hid from their eyes, and it was too late<sup>d</sup>. “How often would I have gathered thee, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not<sup>e</sup>.” Sinners, I beseech you, let not sin and flesh befool you, to make you fly in the face of God, instead of returning to him at his call. Can you think that God is unjust or unmerciful, that would have given you heaven, and you would not accept of it? If he

<sup>x</sup> Deut. xxx. 19.<sup>y</sup> Deut. xxx. 17—19.<sup>z</sup> 2 Cor. v. 20.<sup>a</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 2.<sup>b</sup> Matt. xxii. 9. Luke xiv. 23.<sup>c</sup> Matt. xxii. v.<sup>d</sup> Luke xix. 41, 42.<sup>e</sup> Matt. xxiii. 37.



deny you that everlastingly, which you would not accept of, can you blame him or yourselves? I know what some hearts will be ready to imagine: you will say, 'I was willing to be saved, and therefore this is nothing to me.' But were you willing to take salvation as it was offered? If not, you may as well say plainly, you will have none of it; for you shall have none of it upon any other terms. You would have had mercy by the halves and not in whole. You would have picked out that part of salvation, which pleased you, and left the rest. God would have saved you from the guilt and power of sin, from hell, and from unholiness; and you would have but one of these, without the other: or would have been saved from hell and all other punishments; but you would not be sanctified and brought near to God, and taken off from this world, and set your hearts on the world to come: and you knew, or might know, that God would not halve and part his salvation: you shall have all, or you shall have none. If you will keep sin, you shall keep the curse with it: if you will keep the serpent, you shall have the sting and venom with it. If you will not take Christ for your master, as well as your Saviour, and be ruled by him, when his yoke is so easy, and his burden so light, never look to find rest to your souls<sup>f</sup>. If you will not be converted, you may as well speak out, and say plainly you will not be saved: for it is all one. He that saith, he will not eat and drink, may as well say he will not live: and he that will not take the physic, may as well say, he will not be cured. Sirs, if Christ, and grace, and glory had never been offered to you, nor you had any means to have brought you to the knowledge of him, then you had had some excuse. As Christ saith, John xv. 22. "If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin." If we had not in Christ's name entreated you to return, and offered you salvation, you had some excuse. But now, what can you reasonably say? I dare challenge the reason of all the world, to answer this one reason, by which God will prove, that the unconverted should be condemned. It is reason, that he that would not have heaven upon such reasonable terms as Christ did tender it him, should for ever be shut out.

<sup>f</sup> Matt. xi. 27—29.

What will you say to this, when God shall question thee, and say, ‘What sayst thou, sinner, did not I freely offer thee my grace and salvation?’ Do you believe you shall have the face at the day of judgment, to tell Christ he is unmerciful if he damn you, when he shall tell you, that he would often have gathered you to him, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not? Will not that one word stop thy mouth for ever? What dost thou complain of, man? Is it for want of mercy? Why, what tenderer mercy wouldst thou have had? “I would have gathered thee as the hen, &c.” Sinners, I witness to you this day, that God, and angels, and men shall judge of you, that if you be thrust into hell, it is because you would not be saved; and it is not because God was cruel to you, but because you were cruel and unmerciful to yourselves. I tell you this will prove true at the last.

5. If all these reasons do not satisfy you, I will shew you more, and such as methinks should satisfy any man on earth, that the unconverted cannot be saved. Even because it is an impossible thing. It is a flat contradiction. Why, conversion is part of salvation here, and the perfection of it is an higher part hereafter. Why, sirs, sin is the soul’s sickness, and wound, and death; and grace and holiness is its health and life: and were not that man a fool, that expecteth you should make him well, and not remove his sickness? And cure his wounds, and never heal or close them? Or make a dead man alive, and yet let him be dead still? Why, it is as great a contradiction and impossibility for a man to be saved and not converted. What is it that we must be saved from, but sin and hell? And there is no saving from hell but by saving from sin. “He shall save his people from their sins<sup>h</sup>.” Do you know what the salvation is that God hath promised us in glory? Why it is this: that we should be perfectly freed from all sin, and have the image of his holiness perfected on our souls: that we shall be perfectly in love with God, and perfectly beloved of him, and live in the sight of his majesty, and fill ourselves with the view of his pleased face, and breathe out his praise with the heavenly host for e. er. Doth such a heaven as this is like you? or doth it not? If it do not, you must have none; for

<sup>h</sup> Matt. i. 21.

there is no other, except you will call an alehouse or an whorehouse, or other sensual pleasures your heaven. But if you will have this heaven which God doth offer you, you may easily see that it cannot be had without conversion. Can you be saved from sin, and yet keep it? Can you be perfected in holiness, and yet be unholy? Can you live in the everlasting love of God, and have no true love to him at all? Can you delight in him, and yet have no delight in him, but be weary of him, and delight in your worldly vanities more? Well, sinners! I think I need to say no more. The contradiction is so evident, that you may as well say, 'I will be saved, and I will not,' as to say, 'I will be saved, but not converted.'

But perhaps some vain caviller will say, 'It is true, we cannot be glorified without conversion and holiness, but God might have given us that in another world, though he change us not here.'

*Answ.* But do you not know, that this life is the appointed time of working, and running, and fighting for the crown? The life to come is the time of reward, and of your receiving the prize that here you run for. Would you have God help you in your race, when you are past it, and your time is gone? Or contrary to wisdom and governing justice, to confound the way and the end, this life and that to come? You may with far more wisdom expect, that when you have loitered till the sun be set, God should call it back again, at your desire, that you may have daylight to work by. He gave thee time, and gave thee warning to use it while thou hadst it; and told thee, "this was the accepted time, this was the day of salvation<sup>i</sup>." And to trifle out this time, and then to think that God should give thee both grace and glory in that life, where he hath resolved only to perfect grace in glory, and crown those that have overcome on earth. This is such folly in so great a business, as I desire no friend of mine may be guilty of.

*Object.* 'But it is our ignorance of God that maketh us unholy; and therefore when death hath opened our eyes, as we shall know him better, so we shall the more love him according to that knowledge; and so we shall be sanctified.

<sup>i</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 2.



And God cannot but love those that love him; and therefore they will be saved.

*Answ.* It is not all knowledge of God, that will cause a love to him. If you know him as excellent, and yet as your enemy, and one that standeth resolved everlastingly to punish you, this will provoke no love to him, but hatred. The dignity and worth of an enemy may be some matter of admiration to us, and of reverence, but not of such love as may tend to fruition. It is inseparable from your natures to love yourselves; and therefore you will love that which you think is for your good, and hate that which you think is against you, and tends to your destruction. You will then find that your damnation was part of God's righteous government of the world: and that the whole work of government, was one inseparable frame, begun by legislation, and finished by judgment and execution: and that God will no more break the frame of government, than he will the frame of nature: nor so much. For that he may do when he please, though he will do it rarely, but this his own perfection is against. So that when you see God, as it were obliged everlastingly to destroy you, you cannot close in love with him, as your friend or chiefest good, as those do that enjoy him in the promised glory.

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### CHAPTER III.

V. HAVING thus cleared the way, by shewing you the meaning, and the truth of the point in hand, I shall next come to the application of it to ourselves.

*Use 1.* And first, by way of inference you see from hence, that there is a kingdom of heaven to be obtained. It were in vain to talk who shall come thither, and who shall not, if there were no such thing to be had. Doubt not Christian, thou hast the word of the God of heaven for it. Challenge the tempter, if he would draw thee to doubting, to prove that ever the God of this word deceived any. If he would tempt thee to question, whether it be his word or not; shew him upon it his image and superscription, with the seal of his manifold uncontroled miracles. And ask him what better evidence

mortals can expect, unless they would have God, who cannot be seen, to walk among them, and speak to every particular man. Oh! that thou wouldst be true to God and thyself, and then thou shalt find God will be true to thee. As sure as there is an earth for thee to tread on, and as sure as there is a sun whose light thou seest; so sure is there an heavenly everlasting glory, for every converted, persevering soul. There can be no better ground of assurance than the word of God. I know, that man, whilst he is in this flesh, is strange to things beyond his sense, and hath a natural desire to have his senses themselves to be the inlets of his knowledge; and therefore he is apt to think that either he is uncertain of all that he seeth not, (unless he hath seen the like that may help him to understand it); or else that his knowledge of it, is as no knowledge; but this is a weakness unworthy of a man. What if you had never seen London, or any such city, and should hear the glory of it described by others; would you think it uncertain that there is such a place, because you have not seen it? Nay, further, you have not seen your souls, do you think it therefore uncertain whether you have a soul or no? A man that is born blind did never see the sun, and yet he will not doubt whether there be a sun, when all the world about him telleth him so: and shall not the word of God be taken as soon as the word of a man? You never saw God himself, and yet it is the grossest error in the world to think that there is no God, when we see every hour the works that he hath made; and which we know could none of them make themselves: you see that which assureth you of the things that are unseen. You see the word of God; you see his works, and daily providences; you see a divine testimony, the sufficient ground of your belief. Noah did not see the flood, when he laboured so many years in making the ark. But though the unbelieving world might deride him in the beginning, at the last the flood came and did convince them. "By faith Noah being warned of God, of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark, to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness, which is by faith<sup>a</sup>." O, if the devil could once make you stagger at the truth of the promise, and

<sup>a</sup> Heb. xi. 7.

make you doubt whether there be a heaven and a hell, because you see them not; he might then delude you with the vanities which you do see. But when you believe it upon God's word, as verily as if you saw it, then you will be likely to be Christians indeed. Therefore the apostle bringeth such proof of the doctrine of the resurrection, and when he hath done, he buildeth this exhortation upon it. "Wherefore my beloved brethren, be stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know your labour is not in vain in the Lord <sup>b</sup>."

*Use 11.* Having gone thus far with you, and shewed you that a kingdom of heaven there is; and that certainly none but the converted shall enter it: my next business is, to come nearer your hearts, and to inquire of, and beseech you to inquire of, yourselves, whether you are the converted heirs of this kingdom, or not? Sirs, you hear from the mouth of Christ himself, how the case standeth. He that spoke this will be your judge, and according to this word it is that he will judge you. Believe you not this? I hope you do believe it. Methinks now I should need to say no more to reasonable men, to warn them presently to enter into their own consciences, and try, and try again whether they are converted. But because that this is so necessary a work, I will tell you some of those reasons that should move you presently to set upon this trial: and shew you how desirable it is to be well resolved in this point. For I know that the devil will be such an enemy to it, and the heart so backward to it, that all we can say, is likely to be too little to bring the most, but to a faithful examination of their own souls.

1. The first reason that moveth me to entreat you to try yourselves, is, the weight of the business in hand. A wise man may put a small thing to a venture, but he will not venture all his estate, or liberty, or life, if he can help it. How much less should a wise man venture his soul! Great things and eternal things should be made as sure of as we can. For a man to be in endless happiness or misery, is a matter that should not have one cold, or dull and careless thought: much less should it be ordinarily, or wholly made light of. I profess to you brethren, I wonder how you can

<sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. xv. ult.



so little regard the assurance of your conversion and salvation, as most of the world doth ! As if hell were grown sufferable : or heaven grown of smaller value ; and the glory of it did begin to fade. For, a man that is no heathen, but believeth that a departing soul goes some whither, either to heaven or hell : methinks he should be willing to know whither it should go before it is gone. For, when it is once gone, it is past recalling. Methinks, as long as you are in much doubting of your salvation, this one thought should often be running in your mind : ‘ What if I should not be converted or saved ? What a case were I then everlastingly in ? ’ Your hearts, it is like, do cherish some hopes that you are converted, and all shall be well enough with you when you die : O, but what if it should prove otherwise ? Methinks this one thought should even amaze you, whilst you are in that estate. For all my hopes, what if I should perish ? O, what wise man would put his everlasting salvation or damnation to the venture, if he could possibly get it out of doubt ? Therefore Sirs, I beseech you for the Lord’s sake ; get alone again and again, and put this question to your own consciences, ‘ How can I tell that I am truly converted ? ’ And if you are ready to say, ‘ I hope it is so,’ when you have nothing for these hopes, but because you would have it so ; call to your consciences for the proof of what they say, and do not take your own bare words. It is proof that must carry it, and not mere saying that you are converted. Ask therefore conscience, ‘ How canst thou prove it ? What canst thou shew that will evidence a conversion, more than unsanctified persons may shew ? ’ And I pray you, see that you be not put off too easily, and take not every gloss for evidence ; but in a matter of such consequence, see that you deal faithfully, and go to the very quick : alas ! almost all the comfort of your lives lieth upon it : and your everlasting salvation lieth upon it ; which is much more.

2. Another reason, which makes me the more earnestly desire that you would try, whether you are truly converted, or not, is, because all men by nature are children of wrath, and need conversion, and the greatest part of the world do live and die in their natural state, and never come to be truly converted. Seeing therefore, that it is a thing that every

one must have that will be saved, and yet most men go without it, and therefore are damned, should it not waken you to examine, whether you are of the number of those that are converted, yea or nay? If it were a needless thing that might be spared without your undoing; or if it were a thing that every body hath, or that almost all, or most have; you might be the more secure; but it is not so. What need we more proof than God's express word? "The gate is strait, and the way narrow, and few there be that find it<sup>c</sup>." And common experience seconding this word of God. Do you see that most men are converted, and such as I before described to you? O that it were so! But we shall speak more of this towards the end. Will any man that hath not lost his senses, now stand cavilling, and quarrelling that so few should be saved, instead of making sure of his own salvation? The reason that there are so few, is, because they will not be saved upon God's terms. And if you will take their course, and quarrel with the gracious word and ways of God, instead of submitting to them, you will speed as they, and be carried down the stream for company. But those that care for their souls, will take warning by other men's miscarriages, and be awakened to make sure.

3. Another reason that should move you to examine, whether you be indeed converted or not, is, because the want of this is one of the greatest causes why so few come to be converted, and to be saved. Nothing doth more keep a man from turning back again, when he hath lost his way, than when he doth not know that he hath lost it: and how can he know, that wandereth in the night, and will not inquire and ask the way, or that is so wilful and self-conceited, that he will not believe any man that telleth<sup>d</sup> him he hath lost his way? As long as he is of this mind, he will never turn again. So is it with most of the careless world: they are going into the way of worldliness or vainglory, and live to the flesh, which is clean contrary to the way to heaven, and yet they will not once seriously ask a minister, or ask any one that can inform them, whether that be the way or not? Or whether they shall ever come to heaven in that way? But they trudge on after their fleshly business, as if they had no tongue in their heads; or as if it were not

<sup>c</sup> Matt. vii. 14.

worth the asking, to know whether they were in the way to heaven or hell. Surely, if men will not so much as inquire, or consider with themselves, and examine their way by the word of God, to see whether they are right or wrong, they are never like to be saved. If you, that never had this great cure done upon your souls, did but know so much, you would not rest sure, till it were done. You could not lie down quietly, nor rise quietly: you could not eat or drink, or sleep quietly. Tell me, ever a man or woman of you: could you be quiet, if you were sure that you were yet unconverted, and in a state, that if death should find you in, you must be damned? If you knew this by yourselves, how could you choose but get presently to God on your knees in secret, and cry out, ‘ Help Lord, or I am everlastingly undone! O forgive me, and change my heart and life, or else I am a lost man and woman for ever!’ How could you choose, if you knew yourselves unconverted, but follow God with your prayers day and night till he had changed your hearts. You could not sit at home, but you would go to the ministers, and to experienced Christians, and ask them for some help, and advice for your salvation. But, when men think all is well with them, who can expect that they should put themselves to so much trouble? Or seek much to God or man for cure, or make any great matter of the greatest misery? I do not fear any one thing more, to make me lose all this labour, and leave many of you after all this, unconverted, than this conceit that you are already converted, when you are not. This is it that is most like to hinder our work, and to undo your souls. And therefore for the Lord’s sake, sirs, deny me not this one request, to take a little pains to try whether you are converted. “ For if any man think he is something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.”

4. Another reason that should make you never rest till you know that you are converted, is, because of the many exceeding benefits that the true knowledge of this one thing would afford you. For the truly converted, holding on to the death, shall certainly be saved. O sirs, if you had but this assurance once, you might live quietly, and abound with comforts! You might lie down, and nothing make you afraid: you might rejoice in the mercies of the Lord, as the tokens of his love; and bear his rod with greater



peace, as being the chastisement of a father. Had you but this assurance once, you might hear and read the word with comfort; and when you come to the promises, say, 'These are mine:' you might secretly and publicly pray with comfort, "and have access with boldness to the throne of grace<sup>e</sup>:" you might run to God when any thing aileth you, and call him your Father in confidence of his acceptance: you might gladly feast with the saints in the holy communion of the church: you might cheerfully sing God's praises, and glory in the thoughts of his great salvation. And when you are dying, you might look to heaven as your home, "and long to be dissolved and to be with Christ<sup>f</sup>." And might joyfully let go your departing souls, and say as Christ, "Father, into thy hand I commend my spirit." O sirs, what a blessed life is this, when a man can look upon every thing with comfort! If he look on the godly, he can say, 'They are my brethren:' if on the wicked, he can say, 'I am delivered from their sad estate.' If he look on any of the mercies which he possesseth, he can say, 'They are the fruits of the blood of Christ, and the tokens of his Father's love.' If on his poverty or want, he can say, 'My greater wants are supplied, and these prepare for the everduring riches.' If he look on the law, he can say, 'It hath nothing against him,' because he hath pardon through him that hath borne the curse. If on the Gospel, he can rejoice in it, as the glad tidings of his salvation. If he look on the threatening, he can say, 'It reacheth not a pardoned sinner:' if on the promise, he can say, 'It is my charter for heaven.' If he look upward to heaven, he can say, 'It is my own inheritance, thither I am going, and there I shall shortly be.' If he look downward, toward the place of torments, he can say, 'From thence did grace deliver me.' If there were any terror to a man's soul, it would be in sin, and satan, and death, and hell, but none of these are matter of terror to him. Not sin, for it is pardoned, and mortified in part, and will be perfectly ere long. Not satan, for he is conquered, and cast out of his possession. Not death, for it hath lost its sting, and is become the passage into everlasting life. Not hell, for it will be our perpetual joy, to see that we are delivered from such everlasting torments. In a word, because he can say,

<sup>e</sup> Heb. x. 19. Eph. iii. 12.

<sup>f</sup> Phil. i. 23.

‘ God is my Father, Christ is my Saviour and my Head, the Holy Ghost is my Sanctifier;’ therefore he can say, “ All is mine, as I am Christ’s, and Christ is God’s<sup>g</sup>.” O sirs, what would you give; nay, what would you not give, to be presently put into such a condition? Had you not as lief as have all the world now, that you were sure that you are converted, and in this state of life? Sure, if you were well in your wits, you had. Who would care what becomes of the world, if he were once sure of heaven? Or what become of his corruptible flesh, if he were sure it should go well with his soul, and that flesh itself should rise again to glory. O what a terrible thing it is, for a soul to go out of the body, and not know whither! And how much more to depart under the curse of God! From the damnation of the law, to the condemnation of the judge. But how blessed is it, to remove from the state of a frail and sinful man, to live with Christ, to be “ equal with the angels<sup>h</sup>.”

What say you now, beloved hearers? Is there not weight enough in these reasons to persuade you to try whether you are converted or not? Dare you say there is not? If you dare not, you are witness yourselves that you are convinced. You see it is your duty; or see it is necessary for your own good. Your labour will be small in comparison of the profit: the loss will be nothing; the commodity may be unspeakable. Shall I then as your minister beseech you presently to fall to this work? As a messenger of Christ shall I entreat it of you? As a friend to your souls shall I entreat it of you? It is for yourselves: it is no unreasonable matter, you see, that I ask of you. Conscience shall witness one day to the face of refusers, that it was not unreasonable. Neighbours, I pray you for the Lord’s sake, and for your soul’s sake, do not deny it me. I profess in the presence of the Lord, I had rather you would grant me this small request, than give me all you have in the world: even that you would but make it your business to try, and thoroughly try whether you are yet converted, or no? But then, let me entreat you to do it seriously, and make somewhat of it, and leave it not till you have done your best to be resolved whether it be so with you or not. You do not need to ask me what aileth me to be so earnest with you for such a thing

<sup>g</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 21    2 Cor. iv. 15.

<sup>h</sup> Luke xx 36.

You have heard by the foregoing reasons what aileth me. You may see here in my text what aileth me. When Christ himself saith, "Except you be converted, and become as little children, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." This is the thing then that I entreat you to do : that you would betake yourselves at your next opportunity without delay into some private place, and there bethink yourselves what you have heard ; or at least what is said here in my text : and say thus with yourselves ; ' I see there is no hope of salvation without conversion ; my heart must be turned from the world, and flesh, and sin, to God by Christ, or else I cannot enter into heaven. I know I shall shortly leave this life : doth it not concern me then to see betimes that I be converted ? Was ever such a change as this wrought in my heart, or not ? There is no dissembling with God ; he will not be mocked. What sayest thou, conscience ? Have I ever had such a change, or not ? Thus follow on the inquiry, and leave it not, till you can say off or on whether you have been converted, or not. Or at least till you have some more light into the business than you had before. And if you cannot do it at one time, as it is likely you cannot fully, go do it again and again : think on it as you lie in bed : think on it when you are alone, and say to yourselves, ' Seeing I must be converted or condemned, is it not time for me to know whether it be so with me, or not ? ' And if you cannot get the case well resolved, let me entreat one thing more, which I have often entreated of you ; that you would come to one of us that are your teachers, or go to some judicious, able Christian, and ask advice to help you in trial : for in so great a business, it is dangerous to be mistaken. I do not speak all this to those Christians that have lived long in the fear of God, and have doubts raised in their minds by the temptations of the enemy, or by their own great care of the matter of their salvation, and have asked help of ministers, and taken pains, and done what lieth in them to be resolved, and yet find some doubts remaining. It is not these that I now speak to. Though I would not grudge my labour to these whensoever I can have time for it, to do them any good I could. Yet I would rather advise them to acknowledge the light of grace that shineth in their eyes, and not forget their own experiences,



nor make light of the abundance of that mercy, which hath translated them from darkness into the kingdom of Christ, and feed upon that glory that is propounded to their faith. But I speak to those that either never did yet set to the work of examination, or never followed it, till they discerned their miserable estate, or at least not till they got out of it, but are still sticking in the world and flesh : and also to those young, unsettled Christians that be not yet well resolved for a change ; or at least those that never yet had the advice of any minister, or judicious person, for the right settling of their spiritual estate : for all these, but especially for those that never set upon examination before, I would entreat them, if they find themselves in the dark, and cannot well manage it themselves, or cannot find whether they are converted or not, that they would come to us, and seek advice. I pray you, neighbours, do not think that we are either so stout, or so careless of your souls, as to despise you, or to think it much to take this pains with you. The poorest beggar in town shall be welcome to us, that will come to us on this errand. Indeed, ministers are set in every church, as the physician is in the town, for all that are in distress to resort to for advice, that their diseases may not prove their death. It is not only to preach to you that we are made ministers, but especially to give advice and direction for their salvation to all that have special need, and come to us. Indeed for small matters you should no more trouble a minister, than you should trouble a physician for a cut finger, because you have others enough at hand to give you advice. If all the people of England would use their ministers to this kind of employment, it would be happier for their souls, and happy for the nation, and would make men know better the nature and need of the office of the ministry. We do not desire you to come to us, as the Papist priests make all their people do, to confess every secret sin that they have committed in Lent, before they receive the sacrament at Easter. But when you hear out of the word of God, that no man can be saved except he be converted, and you set yourselves to try whether you are converted or not, and cannot find it out : here your salvation lieth much on the business, and therefore common reason telleth you, that you should take the best advice you can,

and that presently, without delay. And so, you may be much better resolved, and your minds more quieted, and you may go upon surer grounds for your salvation, than perhaps you would otherwise do. There is never an honest minister in England, but would be willing to forbear his meat, or sleep, as far as nature would bear, to help his people in such straits as these; when they come to us, and tell us, 'I have taken some pains to try whether I am converted truly, or not, and I am not able to discern; I know it is your office to help me; I pray you help to resolve my doubt, for I am resolved I will not venture my soul so carelessly as I have done till now.' You do not know what good you might get, if you would but take this course to be resolved. For God will bless his own ordinances. I pray you, therefore, let no carelessness, or bashfulness hinder you; for matters of salvation are not such things that you should either be careless, or ashamed of. However, say not but we offered you our help.

But perhaps you will ask me, When I am examining my conscience, how shall you know whether I am converted or not? By what marks may it be discerned? To this I answer, I have so often given you divers marks already, in the sermons I have preached, and the books that I have written for your use, that I am loath to do the same thing over too often. But for this time it may suffice, if you will but remember that description of the work of conversion, which I gave you before. For in that are all the marks that are necessary.

When you are examining your own hearts inquire then :

(1.) Whether you ever found that change upon your mind that I before mentioned. Are you soundly persuaded of the truth of the word of God, and the life to come? And do you know and believe how vile a thing sin is? And what need you have of Christ? and what he hath done for you, and offereth to do? And do you esteem of the love of God, and the hopes of salvation above all things in this world, and account of all but as dung, that you may win Christ? Are you fully persuaded of the riches of free grace, and of the necessity of a holy life, how much soever you may have slighted them heretofore?

(2.) And have your hearts been so far changed hereupon,

as that you have laid up your treasure and hopes in the life to come; and that is it that you take for your felicity: so that you can truly say, that the main bent and drift of your life is, not for the pleasure or profits of the world, but how to please God, and be happy for ever? Though you may step out of the way by human infirmity, yet this is the bent and scope of your life: this is your chief care, and this hath your most serious thoughts and business. Can you truly say, you use the world for God and for heaven, and do not serve God for the world? And that you take all these outward things, but as necessaries in your journey, but look at heaven as your home and happiness? And that God hath the highest room in your hearts, and the world and flesh stand under him; and that you do not prefer these things before him? And that you are resolved, whatsoever it cost you, to stick to God though you lose the world; and not stick to the world, when it loses you the favour of God? And that God shall be first served, and that the world shall have his leavings; and not the world first served, and God have its leavings? Have you tasted of the infinite love, which he hath manifested for your salvation in the blood of his Son, and admired that free grace, that hath thus purchased your redemption? And fled to Christ, as the only refuge of a guilty soul, from the curse of the law, and the wrath of God; renouncing all conceits of any merits, or legal righteousness of your own, taking Christ and his merits for your righteousness? Do you find that you hate the former sins that you loved, and take pleasure in those holy ways that you had no pleasure in before? And are you resolved thus to hold on to the death?

(3.) Is all this to be seen in your life? Have you in good sadness changed your former courses, and resolved to turn to them no more? Have you left your own ungodly company further than your calling, or necessity, or charity requireth you to be with them? And have you betaken yourselves into the company of those that fear God, and take pleasure in their holy communion, and in their help and company in the way to heaven? Especially do you avoid those great transgressions, by which you were carried away in your ignorance! And are you willing to destroy the remains of your sin, whatsoever it cost you, and not to



spare, or cherish, or befriend it? So that there is no known sin, that you wilfully live in; nor known duty that you wilfully cast off. But you would fain be what God would have you be, and your greatest sorrow is, that you can be no better. And if you fall by any temptation, you rise again with shame and grief, and free confession, and renew your resolution by the grace of God, to take better heed for the time to come.

This is the sum of the work of conversion, and this is the state of a gracious soul. I have left out divers particulars, lest I should be too long, because you may see them together before you; but the rest are implied in these.

When you go then to examine your hearts, set these few questions before you, and put them to your hearts, or else peruse those marks that I have given you in my "Directions of Peace of Conscience," or those in my "Treatise of Judgment," or those in my "Book of Rest." You do not need to be at a loss for marks to try by. Books will help you, or ministers will help you, or friends will help you. But all the difficulty is in two things. 1. To get your heart to the work. 2. To be able to know your own hearts. For they are so dark and deceitful, that without a special light and diligence, you may easily be mistaken in yourselves.

Well, brethren, I again renew my request to you, that seeing you must be converted, or condemned, will you set yourselves to try whether you are converted or not? I hope you be not willing to be deceived; and I hope you do not think that salvation is not worth this much labour. I should hope that I might request as much as this from you, if it were for myself, or a friend; how much more, when it is for your salvation. Tell me, therefore, will you do this much at my request, at Christ's request, yea, and at his command, or will you not? Will you bestow now and then a secret hour about it, and follow it on till you get resolution, and know whether you are converted or not? Truly, neighbours, I do not speak these words to you carelessly or customarily, as matters that I shall never look after when I am out of the pulpit; or as if I cared not whether you ever more minded them, or not. But it is the matter of practice that I regard: whether you will do the thing that I am desiring of you. I am loath you should spend another day in a state of condemnation,

and not know it. I am loath you should spend another day in negligent uncertainty of your everlasting state. If you are converted, I would fain have you know it; if I could procure it, I would have you sure to go to heaven when you die, before you pass another week, or before you go this night to bed. And if you are not yet converted, I would fain have you know it, that you may lay to heart your condition, and without any more delay, may make out for the grace of Christ, that must recover you. I pray you do not think that it is utter despair that I am driving you to. If you should upon trial find that you are unconverted, you need not despair, and say, 'there is no hope.' No, but you must know, that there is mercy before you. Christ hath prepared it for you, and offereth it to you, and is willing you should have part in it if you be willing. Only you must consent to be changed now at last, and resolve to go no further in the old way. It is conversion, and not desperation, that God requireth. And I hope a man may seek after his error to amend it, rather than to despair of the amendment. What, if upon examination, you should perceive that till this hour, you have been in a state of death? It doth not follow, that you must live and die so; but that you must make haste to get out of it, which you will hardly ever do, till you find that you are in it. It were a foolish traveller that will say, 'I will not ask the way, lest I find that I have missed it, and then I have no hope of getting home.' But rather he should ask the way, that if he have missed it, he may know it, and get in the right way before it be night. And because it is my present business, rather to convince the unconverted for their recovery, than the converted for their comfort, I shall here tell you for the negative, who they be that are yet unconverted, and must be changed, if ever they will be saved.

(1.) That man or woman, that never yet perceived and felt that sin is a great and detestable evil, deserving the wrath of God, and that never felt what need they stand in of the pardon of sin, by the blood of the Lord Jesus, nor was ever humbled in the apprehension of his unworthy dealing with God, but can bear his sin as a tolerable burthen, is yet unconverted; and without conversion cannot be saved<sup>i</sup>.

<sup>i</sup> Matt. xi. 28. Luke xiii. 3, 51. Psal. li. 17. Isa. lvii. 15. Luke xiv. 11. xviii. 14.

(2.) That man or woman that was never driven to Christ for deliverance, nor beaten out of the conceits of merit, or sufficiency in himself; nor brought to admire the glorious design of God in the great work of redemption; nor savoured the sweetness of the glad tidings of salvation, which are brought to distressed sinners in the Gospel. So that his heart was never warmed with the sense of the Redeemer's love and blood; but heareth and readeth the Gospel as a common story. Or, as if it were not he that was thus redeemed, is yet unconverted, whatsoever he may seem <sup>k</sup>.

(3.) That person that hath not his heart and hopes in heaven, and looketh not at that as his only happiness, and doth not make it the business of his life to attain it; but setteth his heart more upon the things of this life, is certainly unconverted, whatever he may pretend <sup>l</sup>.

(4.) That person that is not weary of all known sin, and hateth it not, and would not be rid of it with all his heart, and is not willing to be at the labour or cost of duty, in the use of those means which God hath required for the obtaining of a conquest; but will venture his soul upon a careless life, rather than he will be brought to diligent godliness; and taketh up godliness in part upon mere necessity, having rather let it alone if he durst, and taketh it for a grievous thing to be hindred from his sin: that person is not as yet converted, but must have a further change before he can be brought into a state of life <sup>m</sup>.

(5.) That person that doth not set himself to the duties of holiness to God and righteousness, and mercy toward man, that hath not the Spirit of Christ within him, and the image of God upon him, and doth not express it in his worship and obedience, and is not loving, compassionate, and merciful to others, nor humble and low in his own eyes, nor delighteth in doing good, nor is willing to do as he would be done by; I say, that person is not yet truly converted, whatsoever seemings of conversion he may have; but must yet be otherwise converted, or be condemned <sup>n</sup>.

<sup>k</sup> Phil. iii. 8, 9. Eph. iii. 18, 19. Luke vii. 47, 48. Rom. x. 15. Acts xiii. 32.

<sup>l</sup> Phil. iii. 21. Matt. vi. 21. Rom. v. 2. Tit. i. 2. Heb. xi. 1 Cor. xv. 19. Col. i. 5. 23.

<sup>m</sup> Luke xviii. 23, 24. Rom. vi. 14, 16, 17, 21. vii. 13, 22, 24. Psal. cxix. 5.

<sup>n</sup> Matt. v. Heb. xii. 14. 1 Pet. i. 15, 16. ii. 5. 2 Pet. iii. 11. Heb. iii. 1. Psal. i. 2.



(6.) That man or woman that hath any thing in this world, that is so dear to them that they cannot spare it, and part with it for Christ, and obedience to his command, but will rather venture their souls upon his threatenings, and will only take up so much of religion as may stand with their worldly prosperity or seeming felicity, and are not resolved by strength of grace, rather to let go all than Christ: I say, that person is yet unconverted, and must have a further change, or be condemned °.

Now, the Lord have mercy on poor sinners! What a world of them are yet in the state of death! And how little do they believe it, or lay it to heart! I wonder what men think of such words in Scripture, when they meet with them. Sure they cannot choose but consider that they concern them as well as others. And if no man can be saved without conversion, they must needs know they cannot. What then do these men think of themselves? Do they think that they are converted, or that they are not? If they think they are not, then surely they durst not rest till they are. For I do not think they are willing to be damned. It must needs be, therefore, that they think they are converted, when they are not; and that is the thing that deceiveth and quieteth them in their misery. But it is worth inquiry to find out what it is that so deceiveth men, that the grossest worldling, or the vilest sensualist, are yet persuaded that they are converted, gracious men; and I find among others these three things are the cause. 1. They do not know what conversion is, but take that to be true conversion, which is no such thing. 2. They do not know themselves, but take themselves to have what they have not, and do what they do not, and be what they be not. And 3. They are resolved to believe what they would have to be true, be it never so false; and therefore will rather think they are well already, than they will be at the trouble to know that it is otherwise, and to use the means for a thorough discovery.

*Use 111.* By the foregoing inquiry, we have certainly found, that conversion is too strange a thing in the world; and that the greatest part of the world, yea, of those that are called by the preaching of the Gospel, are yet unconverted. The consideration of this must needs be a grief to

° Matt. xvi. 24. x. 37, 38. Luke xiv. 33. Phil. iii. 19. Matt. xiii. 6. 20, 21.

the heart of every faithful minister, that knoweth the misery of an unconverted man, and foreseeth his latter end. It will be a grief to any honest physician, if he have a whole hospital of sick persons under cure, to see that the most of their diseases are mortal, and to find but few recovered by the greatest skill and care that he can use; how much more must the everlasting danger of men's souls be grievous to those that are appointed to watch over them? Would the Lord but cause you to know your own misery, as we know it, and to compassionate yourselves, as we must compassionate you, we should have the more hope of your recovery. Will you now join with us in lamenting your own condition, and lay to heart what a case it is to be unconverted? Truly humanity, and much more Christianity, doth bind us to think on your condition with lamentation. Should we see an enemy; should we see a very dog in torment, and have no compassion? How much less, so many men and women that are so near us, and so dear to us in the flesh? Alas, that there is such a glory, and most men will miss of it! That there is such a fire prepared for the devil and his angels, and the most will run themselves wilfully into it! Why, faith maketh things absent as if they were present. That which will be so one of these days, I look on it as if it were even so already. Oh! methinks I see the thousands of the unconverted, departing from the face of an angry Judge; who hath newly shut them up under his final sentence, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire<sup>P</sup>." If you ask me, why I tell you of such sad things? Truly, brethren it is, because they are much more sad to suffer, than to hear of; and because you are yet alive in a possibility of preventing them. If you marvel that I should believe such things, when no man seeth them: it is because I am a Christian. And if you believe them not as well as I, you would do well to say so plainly, and do not dissemble any longer, and take on you to be Christians, when you are not; and to believe God's word, when you do not. I profess to you, I should take it but for a paltry profession, to ride up and down to preach the Gospel, and trouble the minds of men in vain, and get the ill will of most of our neighbours, and tire and spend ourselves in this work, if it

were not certainly true, which we must tell them ; and if the Gospel were a fable or human device. If the word of God were not true, ministers have the most unworthy employment upon earth. But if it be true (as nothing is more certain), O Lord, what hard hearts then have we, that we are no more affected with your condition ! And what hearts have you, that are no more affected with your own ! The Lord knows, if I were not confident that this word is true, that telleth us of the danger of all that are unconverted, I would not have been here to-day ; nay, I would shut up my books, and take another trade in hand, and never preach more. But shall a man that knows the unconverted will be condemned, forbear to tell them of the misery that is near them ? Then were our case more sinful than yours, for you know it not, and therefore love not to hear of it. I believe it, and know it, and yet should I silence it ? I know it is unpleasant doctrine, but it is necessary, and it is most true ! God never yet did prove a liar ; if he were not true, he were not God. You will believe yourselves the things that you see not, upon common experience ; and why should not I believe that which I see not, upon a better ground ? You see not the sun at midnight, and yet you believe that it will rise the next morning, because it useth to do so. You see no flowers or fruits on the earth in winter, and yet you believe that you shall see them the next year, because they use to come in their seasons. You are now all alive, and see not your graves digged, nor your friends about you, there laying you, and leaving you in darkness to the worms, and yet you know that such a day will come, though now you see it not ; as truly do I know, that there is endless woe to every sinner that dieth unconverted. I see not the flames, nor do I hear the cries of damned souls, but yet I know that there they are, while we sit here, and there they will be to all eternity. It is like, the man in Luke xvi. was a gentleman of quality, that had so bountiful a table, and was clothed so gorgeously every day. Alas, his poor brethren it is like, did little think what was become of his soul, when they had laid his body in the earth. If a preacher should have told them he was afraid he was in hell, do you think they would not have been ready to fly in his face, or account him intolerably self-conceited, or precise ; and yet



the Lord Jesus brings us news that he was in hell-torment, wishing that one might be sent from the dead, to warn those his poor brethren that he had left behind him on the earth. No doubt, he knew that they were all of the same mind as he was, when he was alive; and as fleshly, and worldly, and careless of their salvation, and therefore were in the road-way to the same condemnation; or else if he had known them to be godly, heavenly-minded men, he would never have thought them in such danger, as it seems he did. But we read not that they had any such fears of themselves as he had. If one had come to them from the dead, and told them, that their late worshipful brother was in hell for his sin, and knowing them to be all in the way to the same misery, had sent to them to beseech them presently to be converted, lest they also come to that place of torment: what welcome do you think such a messenger would have had? I know not well what fear of a dead man appearing to them, might have done; but I partly imagine what entertainment a minister should have had, that had said the like. Verily, sirs, the case of careless sinners is never the safer, because they see not, and fear not the danger. A man in a consumption or dropsy, is never the further from death, though he be never so confident that he shall not die. If a thief at the gallows have a conceit that he shall escape, that will not save his life. What if you should have an hundred men that you had known on earth, sent to you from the dead one after another, and all of them should tell you this one sentence in my text, That there is none enter into heaven but converted souls; would you not begin to look about you, and say to yourselves, Am I converted or not? What a case am I in then, that am yet in the flesh? It may be if one appeared to you in your chamber in the night, and told you this news, it would only affright you a little, and you would forget it. Perhaps if two or three only should appear to you, and tell you it, you might forget it again; but if twenty should tell it you, methinks it should awaken you. Why, sirs, the words of the Lord are of more weight, than the words of a thousand dead men are. "If you will not believe him, neither will you be persuaded though one rise from the dead<sup>a</sup>." Seeing these things are

<sup>a</sup> Luke xvi. 31.

so, I do not blame ministers, if they be plain and earnest with you, though some may think them precise, and besides themselves. Paul was put to make this answer; "For whether we be besides ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause<sup>r</sup>." Truly, we are like a physician, that seeth a foolish man eating arsenic, or mercury, and telleth him, O what are you doing? it is deadly poison, you must presently take a vomit, or it will kill you. But because it is sweet, derides the physician, and bids him look to himself, he hopes he shall do as well as he, till he feel the griping and burning at his heart, and then he will believe it. Oh! the gripes of a damned man's conscience, when he reflects on the day of grace which he lost on earth! We tell you not of this to drive you to despair, but to persuade you to take the vomit of repentance, and to cast up your sins before you are past hope. Do not think we wrong you, to foretel you what will come of it, if you die unconverted. If there were any wrong in it, it must be laid on God that can do no wrong. If he have not bid us tell you of them, then take us for your enemies and spare not: call us liars, if we shew you not his word for it. But alas, when God hath revealed your danger, must we hide it? And that when he hath foretold us, that if we tell you not of it, your blood shall be required at our hands, Ezek. iii. 18. Read that text well, and tell me then, whether you would have us such cruel enemies; I had almost said such devils to you and to ourselves, as to hide a matter of such inconceivable moment from your eyes? What good would it do you to be thus flattered into hell? What good would it do you to have us to be damned with you, for being unfaithful for the preventing of your damnation? Who will laugh at this but satan, the great enemy both of us and you? Alas, you may easily think with yourselves that it is no pleasure to a minister to tell you so sad a story of your misery. But if a Balaam must say, "If Balak would give me the house full of gold and silver, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord, to do less or more<sup>s</sup>;" must not Christ's ministers be as faithful? I say again, if this Gospel were not true, I would be a sweeper of channels, rather than a preacher; and I would join in a petition to have all ministers banished the

<sup>r</sup> 2 Cor. v. 13.<sup>s</sup> Numb. xxii. 18.

land: but seeing it is otherwise, I appeal to your consciences, who it is that wrongeth you: whether Christ and his ministers to tell you of your danger, or yourselves to make light of it, and to refuse the cure?

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## CHAPTER IV.

THUS much I have spoken to you, to make you willing to hear and know the truth of your condition; my next desire is, that you will lay it well to heart. You will never make out aright for the remedy, till you feel your misery. Alas, what abundance of people are there in the world that never were converted, and yet live as carelessly as if all were well with them! Come among twenty that are as merry as the best, and ask them one by one, whether they are converted or not? And some will tell you, they hope so, they cannot tell; and some will deride you; and most of them perhaps know not what conversion is, nor ever much minded any such thing; and yet these very men do read, or hear the word of God, that telleth them so plainly, that, "Except they be converted, they shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." What do you think, sirs, of such words, when you hear them, or read them? Are you never touched at the heart with them, and doth conscience never make you cry out, Alas, then, what will become of me? Well, because I would have you sensible of your condition, lest you should rest in it to your undoing, I will tell you a little further, what it is in some particulars: and the Lord awake you to lay them to heart!

1. As long as you are unconverted, you are no true children of God, nor members of Jesus Christ. And therefore you have no part in that fatherly, special love, but still stand before his eyes as enemies. For your hearts are not towards him, but toward the things below, as you know, or might know if you would. The world is divided into two sorts, the children of God, and the children of the devil: the converted, and they only, are the children of God, as you may see, John i. 10, 11. Rom. viii. 9. All the unconverted are the children of the devil, as Christ himself calls some of them, John viii. 44. And so 1 John iii. 10. it is said of



them all ; and long ago they were called the seed of the serpent, Gen. iii. 15. It is by faith in Christ Jesus that we are made the sons of God <sup>a</sup>; and the unconverted have not true faith. When you go to God in prayer, if you cannot call him your Father, what comfort can you expect? If you look up for a blessing on your labours, and for supply of your wants, if it be not to a father's hand that you look, how cold will the comfort of them be! Why, it is conversion that turneth the heart to God, and if he have not your hearts, you are not his children, and therefore none of the unconverted are his children. You are "all by nature the children of wrath <sup>b</sup>;" and therefore not the children of God. And by regeneration you are new-born children of God: and it is conversion that is this regeneration. You may call him Father as long as you will, but he will never call you children till you are converted. You may think you have as good right in him as another, but he will never own you, till you are converted. You may call him, Lord, Lord, even to the last, but he will tell you, "he knoweth you not <sup>c</sup>." It is not nature, but renewing grace, that putteth upon you his image, and putteth within you his Spirit and holy nature, and if you have not that image, that Spirit, that holy nature, whatsoever you may think yourselves, he will never take you for his children <sup>d</sup>. All the children of God are somewhat like him: "they are holy, as he is holy <sup>e</sup>." And it is conversion that maketh men in their places and measure like to God. It is plain therefore, that the unconverted are none of his children ; and then how can they expect his fatherly love, or his fatherly care of them in the time of their necessity? The goodness of God is the foundation of all the creature's hopes, but if you will keep out of the way of his goodness, and yet expect the benefit of it, you are like to be deceived ; for an enemy or a stranger cannot look for the portion of a child.

And as you are no children of God, so you are no members of Christ without conversion ; for we are adopted only in Christ ; and therefore children of God, because members of Christ, who is his natural son. It is conversion that makes us members of Christ. I suppose you will confess,

<sup>a</sup> Gal. iii. 26. Eph. iii. 17. <sup>b</sup> Eph. ii. 3. <sup>c</sup> Matt. vii. 22.

<sup>d</sup> Gal. iv. 6. Rom. viii. 9. 1 Pet. i. 14. <sup>e</sup> 1 Pet. i. 16.

that if you were not Christians, you were miserable: and if you be not converted, you are not true Christians. You may have the name, but you have not the nature. You may keep a room among those that profess themselves Christians; but God that knoweth the heart will ask you, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment<sup>f</sup>?" And then you will be speechless. That man that hath no part in Christ, how sad and miserable a condition is he in! It was the terrible description of the case of Simon Magus, "Thou hast no part nor lot in this matter; thou art yet in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity<sup>g</sup>." And the proof was, "because his heart was not right in the sight of God<sup>h</sup>." He was baptized, and had a kind of belief, but yet he was not converted, and therefore had no part in Christ. All the hopes and life of the world, is laid up in Jesus Christ, 1 John v. 11, 12. He therefore that hath no part in him, hath no hope, no life, no ground of peace, or comfort. Without a Saviour, how dare you draw near to God in prayer? How dare you think of death or judgment? What a sad appearance are you there like to make? Oh! woe, and ten thousand woes to that man, that must stand at the bar of God, without a part in the blood of Christ, and must answer there without that advocate. Nay, he will be judge himself, and will justify none but those that are his members. You will sure confess yourselves, that if you have no part in Christ, you are in a most miserable case. Why brethren, the case is as plain in Scripture as the high way, 'That if you are yet unconverted, you are no true Christians, and have no part in Christ, as to any saving interest. You are by nature in another stock, and it is converting grace that must cut you out, and plant you into Christ, the living vine. This is the very nature of true conversion: therefore must men be humbled, and mortified, and broken off from themselves and all creatures, that they may be removed and planted into Jesus Christ; and may abide in him, and he in them, and that in him they may bring forth fruit; for out of him you are nothing, and can do nothing. And whatsoever you may profess, you are but withered branches, and must be gathered up, and cast away, and burnt in the fire<sup>i</sup>. It is all one to be a man, and not to

<sup>f</sup> Matt. xxiv. 12.<sup>g</sup> Acts viii. 23.<sup>h</sup> Acts viii. 21.<sup>i</sup> John xv. 1. 4—6.

be born ; as to be a true Christian, and not to be new-born : for as our conception and birth is the passage into the life and world of nature, so our conversion or new-birth is the passage into the life of grace. We that know not your hearts, do call you all Christians that seem to be so ; but if we certainly knew who they be that are yet unconverted, we should tell these men to their faces, they are no Christians. Their souls are not yet washed with the blood of Christ, nor are they sanctified by his Spirit, and therefore having not his Spirit, they are none of his<sup>k</sup>. O therefore in the name of God look about you sirs, and you that have lived so long unconverted, remember you have lived so long without a part in Christ. And therefore lament that you have taken on you to be Christians so long, when it is not so, and now be such as you have seemed to be. The union between Christ and true Christians, is internal, in the heart : mere words and ceremonies unite not men to Christ.

2. Consider further, I beseech you ; there is no hope of the salvation of any unconverted man, that so liveth and dieth. This is true, whether you like it or not. If you are offended at this saying, you are offended with the saying of Christ that redeemed you : and it were better for you to be offended with your sins, than with Christ that condemneth them. If you say, it is a hard saying, I am sure it is a true saying, for God cannot lie. I gave you the proofs of it before at large : if you forget them, remember my text, and you need no more. What hypocrites then are those wretches, that say they will not believe it, and yet for all that, will take on them to be Christians, and to believe the word of God. You read here that Christ protesteth, “ Verily, that except ye be converted ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” And when you read it, yet you say, you will not believe it. And yet you will say, that you are Christians and believe Christ. What contradictions are these ! What ! wilt thou worship a God, whom thou takest to be a liar ? This cannot be : no man can heartily trust him, especially in so great a matter as his salvation, whom he takes for a liar. Thou wouldst not give God the lie ? If he be not perfectly good, he is not God : and wilt thou then feign a God that is like to liars, or wicked men ? No

<sup>k</sup> Rom. viii. 9.



marvel then if you be liars yourselves, if you think God be one; for no man is bound to be better than God. And therefore I will never marvel to see any man do that evil which he conceits that God himself will do.

But what will sinners get by this unbelief? It is but the way of their own self-delusion, and undoing. He that will not believe God, I cannot expect he should believe me, or any man: nor can he rationally expect to be believed himself. Yet I will ask him the question.

You that see what Christ saith, and yet say you will not believe it, but that unconverted men may be saved; what say you? Do you know any man in the world that you will believe, if he speak to you with such protestation as Christ here doth? If you do not, it seems you measure other men by yourselves. If you do, I would fain know of you, whether you think that any man is better than God? I had rather believe that God is true, and every man a liar, than that men are true, and God is a liar, Rom. iii. 4. And I would further ask you; would you have any man believe you, or take your words? If you say no, he is not wise that will have any thing to do with you, if he can choose: and then you openly proclaim what you are, even such liars that you would not wish men to believe you: but if you say aye, then I would further ask you, whether you dare take on you to be better than God? Why, thou sinful lump of clay, thou frail, imperfect, mutable wretch, wouldst thou be believed thyself, and wilt thou not believe God? Darest thou say that thou art truer and better than God, and that thy word is to be taken before his word? If thou dare, do not blame him if he shortly stop that presumptuous mouth of thine, with his confounding indignation; and if he make that blaspheming tongue to be speechless, when he shall say, "Take him, bind him hand and foot, and cast him into utter darkness<sup>1</sup>." And then thou wilt have weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Well then, if God be not to be believed, no one is; and if God be to be believed, then no unconverted man shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. And is it not time for you then to consider of your condition, and look about, whether you be converted or not? I pray you be not so

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxii. 12, 13.

silly, as to take these words as mine, and so to think that it is I that make the matter so terrible. If I had not found them in the Bible, I had never preached them to you; and we have nothing to preach, but what we here find, and to open this to you, that you may understand it. It will be nevertheless true, if neither I, nor any preacher in England should tell you of it; or if none of us did believe it. For our unbelief maketh not the word of God of none effect. I do therefore entreat you all, as you are men of reason, see that you be truly converted, because no unconverted man shall be saved; it is God that saith it, it is the devil that denieth it, and will you believe the devil before God? This was it that brought destruction first upon the world, when God told our first parents, that if they sinned they should die; and the devil told them, they should not die, and they believed the devil rather than God. And have you this warning, and will you do so too? Is that a Christian, yea, is that a man, or worthy the name of a man, that will considerately believe the devil before God? And believe his own flesh and carnal reason before God? Whether is God or the devil think you, the better, and the more to be believed, and the better friend to your souls, and more to be trusted and regarded? O horrible wickedness! that ever men should put us on such a question, or make any comparison! And what are you, that you should presume to set your reason against Christ? God saith, 'Verily the unconverted shall not be saved,' and you say, for all this you hope they shall: and what are you, that you should be believed before God? What, do you know more than he? Why, where had you that knowledge? Is there any knowledge in the world, that comes not from God? And doth he give you more than he hath himself? Is a dungeon lighter than the sun? Or is there any light here below, but what comes from the sun mediately or immediately? Why, a dungeon may better compare with the sun, and say, 'I have more light than thou;' than thou canst compare with God, and say, 'I have more knowledge than thou.' Oh! that ever dust and ashes should be so blind, as not to know this! And that ever they should prefer their blindness, to the infinite knowledge of him that made them! If you do not, how dare you say, you hope that will prove false which God

hath spoken? But do you think that this unbelief will make your danger ever the less? No, it is this that increaseth your danger. What if a man in the midst of evil, will wink, or put his eyes out, is he therefore safe, because he seeth not his danger? Again, therefore, I beseech you, if you be men of reason, if you be not resolved to be your own enemies, and to do the worst you can against yourselves, if you do not long for damnation; O, then believe God, and take time while you have it, and make out for conversion without delay. And instead of hoping to be saved against the word of God, and as it were in despite of him, and whether he will or no; see that you presently yield to the word, by which he would convert you, if you do not resist it. Believe your present misery, and look out presently to Christ for the remedy, and thank God that you may, and that the day of his patience is not past. And if the devil and sin do still so harden your hearts, that you will not believe, nor take this counsel, remember that thou wast told, that the unconverted shall not enter into heaven. Remember that this was preached to thee from the word of God, and thou wouldst not believe it. Yea, thou shalt remember it whether thou wilt or no.

3. I beseech you consider further; that while a man is unconverted, he hath no sin pardoned; all the sin that ever he committed, is yet upon his own score, and he shall answer for it before God, and suffer for it for ever, if he thus continue. I do not speak this either of my own head: I will now give you but three texts of Scripture to prove it, which is as good as three hundred. Mark iv. 12. When Christ speaks of those that were judicially hardened, because they had wilfully resisted grace, he addeth, "Lest at any time they should be converted, and their sin should be forgiven them." By which you see, that till men are converted, their sin is not forgiven them. And Acts xxvi. 18. "I send thee to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance," &c. You see then, that men receive not forgiveness of sins, till they are turned from the power of sin to God. Rom. viii. 30. This is the order of God's saving grace. "Whom he calleth, (that is, converteth) them he justifieth; and whom



he justifieth, them he glorifieth." So that no man is justified, before he be called.

Consider then, what a fearful case it is to have a load of unpardoned sin upon your souls. One unpardoned sin would as sure condemn a man for ever, as one stab at the heart would kill a man. What then will so many thousands do? Poor sinner, if Christianity, and humanity did not bind me to compassionate thy soul, I would not tell thee these things to trouble thee. But I cannot forbear, unless I would be cruel to thee. It seemeth an easy matter to a felon to think of his crime, while he is not apprehended, because he lives in hope to escape, and therefore he can laugh when he talks of the gallows; but when he comes to it, the case is altered: offenders may escape the justice of men, but no man can so escape the hand of God. It may now seem a small and easy matter to you, to think and talk of unpardoned sin; but the day is coming when you would give all the world if you had it, for a pardon, as light as you do now make of it: all are sinners, but all are not unpardoned sinners: it is not all sinners that shall perish; for then we should all perish; but all unpardoned sinners shall perish; and all unconverted sinners are unpardoned. When sin is pardoned, the terror of it is gone; then a man hath a sure refuge against the accusation: he can say at judgment, if he be accused of his sin, that he hath a pardon of all through the blood of Christ, and then there is no more to be done against him: but so cannot the unpardoned. O, heavy case for a poor trembling sinner to hear, 'At such a time thou didst abuse God's creatures, and his name, and his word, and his ordinances; at such a time thou didst neglect duty, and misspend thy time, even the Lord's day,' and to have nothing to say against the accusation. What a sight will it be for him, to have all his sins set in order before him<sup>1</sup>! All the sins of his youth, and his riper age; of ignorance, and of knowledge, and have no remedy against the justice and the wrath of God! Once there was a remedy offered them, but being finally neglected, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, "but a certain looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation that shall devour the adversary<sup>m</sup>." Tell me, I beseech you, sirs, what do you think

<sup>1</sup> Psal. l. 21.

<sup>m</sup> Heb. x. 26.

to do by the sins that you are guilty of? Do you believe that you shall come to judgment for them, or not? If not; what do you here among Christians? If you do, will you tell me what you mean to say, or how do you think to come off, and to escape? Either you must have a pardon, or not: if you have not pardon, what do you think will become of you? There is no question of it, but an unpardoned sinner must be damned, as sure as the devils themselves are damned: for Christ telleth you this will be the sentence, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels". O, woe to that man that ever he was born, that shall stand at God's bar with unpardoned sin. It will be heavier upon thy soul, than a mountain upon thy body, and press thee down to everlasting misery. Unpardoned sin is the very fuel of hell. If angels and men should all join together to save an unpardoned sinner at judgment, they could not do it. What hope have you then to escape, or to see the face of God with comfort? I beseech you, bethink you what you mean to say, or how you think to come off? Should a wise man be going to such a judgment, and never once think what to say for himself, or how to escape when he comes thither? Will you then plead, that 'you hope you are pardoned by the blood of Christ?' Why, alas! that will be utterly vain; for there is no hope that God will be false to his word; and God hath assured you, that the blood of Christ and the mercy of God shall never pardon any sinner, but he that repenteth and is converted of his sin. Will you say, 'Though I am not pardoned now, yet I hope I may beg pardon then.' And do you think to cry aloud, and persuade the Judge? Oh! if that would do, what a cry would there then be! How many thousand and thousand souls would cry, 'Mercy, mercy, Lord, on a poor miserable wretch! O pity a lost sinner! O do not condemn thy creature; do not deliver me up to the tormentor; do not send me away from thy presence into those flames! O, as ever thou hadst pity on a sinner, have pity on me.' If crying, and praying would then serve the turn, how would they ring in the ears of Christ! Oh! but it is then too late! too late, sinners! you should have done this sooner. The day of grace is now past, and there is no remedy. Now

prayer might do good (with forsaking sin through the blood of Christ) and men will not use it, but then it will do no good at all.

Do not say that I make this terrible doctrine of myself; the Scripture is full of it. Christ hath told you over and over of it: that if you are then found without the oil of saving grace in your lamps, you shall in vain cry ‘Lord, Lord, open to us;’ and long enough may you knock, before you can have any hearing; but Christ will say, “Verily, I know you not<sup>o</sup>.” It is not they that will cry “Lord, Lord, that shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but they that do the will of our Father which is in heaven.” For many in that day will plead acquaintance with Christ, to whom he will profess, “I never knew you, depart from me all ye that work iniquity.” They are his own words in Matt. vii. 21—23. I tell you again, if all the angels in heaven should fall down before the Lord Jesus Christ, and beg for you, (which they will never do) and beseech him to pardon your sins, he will not do it. For it is in this life that pardon must be gotten, or never. We have no hope to be wholly free from sin, but we may procure the pardon of it through Christ, and if it be not done now, it will never be done. Now must the pardon be procured, and sued out, and then it must be brought forth that you may not be condemned.

Now, as ever you would stand with boldness in judgment; sinners, repent and be converted, that you all may have the pardon of all your sins. As ever you would stand then at Christ’s right hand, and not be sent into everlasting torment, look about you now for the pardon of your sins; for there was never man that got a pardon after he was dead, who died unpardoned. I give you but the same counsel which Peter gave the Jews. “Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord<sup>p</sup>.” I pray you mark these words; you see there no man’s sins will then be blotted out, but those that now repent and are converted.

4. The next thing that I would entreat you to consider, is this; that as long as you are unconverted, you are the servants and slaves of satan, and under his power, and led

<sup>o</sup> Matt. xxv. 11, 12.

<sup>p</sup> Acts iii. 19.



about as his captives at his will. It may be you do not think so much, nor believe this, but perhaps would take it ill to be told so. But God hath told us that so it is. There are but two sorts of men in the world, the slaves of sin, and the servants of Christ. All the world is in two armies: *satan* is the general of one, and Christ of the other, and these two are in continual conflict with one another. In his first assault with Adam our first father, *satan* overcame him by drawing him to sin, and thereby got him and his posterity into his power. The Lord Jesus comes of purpose to rescue us out of his hands, and this he doth by converting grace, and justification thereupon. So that, till a man be converted, he remaineth in the bondage and slavery of the devil; and when he is converted, he is entered among the freemen and sons of God.

What think you of this? Is it not a miserable state to be the devil's bond-slaves? Why, if you will believe God, it is the case of all that are unconverted: nay, you may feel it in yourselves. Do you not feel that your wills are to do evil? That he leadeth you to worldliness, to drunkenness, or wickedness at his will? If he bid you rail or swear, you do it. If he bid you neglect everlasting life, you do it, and you have no heart to God and the life to come. Why, these are the marks of *satan's* bondage. Hear whether the Sripture speaks it not plainly: "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness<sup>q</sup>." "He that committeth sin is of the devil. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God<sup>r</sup>." The meaning of both is, that he that hath the main bent of his heart and life for sin, that is, for the flesh and the world, is of the devil: and he that hath the main bent of his heart and life for God, that is, for righteousness, is a converted child of God. So, 2 Pet. ii. 19. "For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." And in 2 Tim. ii. 26. they are said to be in the "snare of the devil, taken captive of him at his will." And in Acts xxvi. 18. it is expressly said, that conversion "turneth men from the power of *satan* unto God." So

<sup>q</sup> Rom. vi. 16.<sup>r</sup> 1 John iii. 8. 10.

that you see the case is plain in Scripture: that, till men are converted, they are in the power of satan.

It may be you perceive not the misery of your condition; and no marvel, for satan's servants are all volunteers, and he useth to keep his possession in peace, till a stronger than he shall come upon him, and cast him out; Luke xi. 21. O that the eyes of poor sinners were but opened to see who it is that leadeth them about! Poor soul! didst thou but see that the devil is thy ruler, that he standeth by thee, and puts thee on in all thy wickedness, it would sure make thee desire to change thy master. You are afraid of seeing him appear to you in any shape, and if you should but see him, it would make your joints to tremble. O! why are you not afraid to be ruled by him, and to follow him to your destruction? Why are you not more afraid, lest you should dwell with him for ever? A man that is in the favour of God, were not much the worse if he should see all the devils in hell, no more than a soldier to see the enemies, when they are conquered; but a man that is unconverted, whether he see them or not, should tremble to think that he is yet in their snares. O that you did but know, and well consider, that it is the devil himself within you that cavilleth against the word of God, and contradicteth the truth, and draweth you to doubt, and enticeth you to sin. If you did hear the devil say to you with a voice, 'Come, follow me to the alehouse,' it would sure frighten you from going. Or if you heard him speak out, and say against the Gospel, 'It is not true, do not you believe it,' how would this affect you? Why, it is he that speaks this in you, whenever you have these thoughts in your hearts. Your own corrupt hearts are the mother, but he is the father of them all. When you feel such thoughts as these within you, that sin is a small matter, and that God doth not hate it so much as preachers talk of, and that God will not condemn all the unconverted, that so live and die, and that men may be saved without a holy life, and that this is but preciseness, and more ado than needs, all this is as truly the very inward persuasions and motions of the devil, as if you heard him speak it openly in a voice. It is he that bids you 'go on in sin and fear not, and yet at least take a little more of your fleshly pleasure, and if you must turn, let it not be

yet.' It is he that bids you hate them that endeavour your conversion, and make a scorn of those that fear God. It is he that bids you lose your time, especially on the Lord's day, and talk of filthiness or vanity, and rail, or lie, or backbite, or hate your brother; as truly as if you saw and heard him, this is he. The Scripture telleth us so, that this is his work, which Christ did come into the world to destroy<sup>s</sup>. We can certainly know the workman by his work. So bad a work hath no better an author. I beseech you, therefore, in the name of God, bethink you where you are, and what a case you are in. Have you known all this while, that you were in the power and captivity of the devil? What, and yet be so merry or careless as you have been? What, sleep quietly, and live quietly, and yet be in such a case? Why, if a man be taken prisoner by the Turks, and laid in a dungeon, or put into their gallies, how sadly doth he take it? How many a sigh and groan comes from him, to think where he is, and what a case he is in, in comparison of other men! And many a time he cries, 'O that I were free!' And yet all the servants of satan are willing of their bondage. This is it that makes you deserve the less pity, because it is your own doing, and you will not be delivered. A Turkish slave would be delivered if he could, and would give a thousand thanks to him that would deliver him: but you might be delivered and will not. Christ hath provided a remedy in his blood, he offereth it to you, and entreateth you to accept it, and yet you will not. He hath commanded us to entreat you, and you will not be entreated. "God would have all men saved, and come to the knowledge of his truth," and many will not be saved. Christ "would gather them as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing, and they will not<sup>t</sup>." When God offers you help, and ministers offer you help, and godly friends offer you help, and fain they would have you delivered, and you will not; what pity do you deserve, if you perish everlastingly? It is a strange thing to see how people hate the devil, and yet love his service! How they speak ill of him and yet obey him! How they even spit at his name, as men that abhor him, and yet will not be persuaded by any means that we can use, to come out of this captivity, when the doors are set

<sup>s</sup> 1 John iii. 8.<sup>t</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 4. Matt. xxiii. 37.



open by Christ that bought them. Not that I suspect that any of you do really love him ; for I know that God hath put an enmity in the beginning, even between the nature of satan and of man<sup>u</sup>. I know you hate him, even while you wilfully serve him. But the matter lieth here ; though you hate him, you love the sin, because it is pleasant to flesh and blood, and you do not know, or will not consider that it is he indeed that leadeth you to it ; or else you durst not continue in that case. Well sirs, lay this to heart, and believe that all men are slaves to satan till they be converted ; and if you are not willing to live and die his slaves, and to be used for ever as his slaves, delay not your conversion.

5. Moreover, the misery of the unconverted doth further appear in this ; that while men are unconverted, nothing that they do can truly please God. There are many works which, for the matter of them, are commanded, which such men may do, but yet there are so many defects, and so much of the venom of their corruption mixt in them, that God hath no delight in them, but doth abhor them. I would not be misunderstood in this, as if I said or thought, that therefore, all that the unconverted can do, is to no purpose, in order to their salvation : and that, therefore, it is as good for them to let all alone, and sit still and be careless till God shall convert them ; or as if it were better, or as good for them not to pray, as to pray, and not to hear or read, or ask advice, as to do it, because that all is displeasing to God. But I mean, and say, that there is more in their best duties to displease God, than to please him, and that they are such as he hath made them no promise of accepting, so far as to give them any special grace, or reward thereupon. Or if this please not any, yet this much is out of controversy, that the duties of no unconverted man are pleasing to God, so as to prove their persons pleasing to him, as his own servants are ; and that God takes no delight in their duties, as he doth in those that are performed by the righteous. And thus at least you may take it as beyond all question, that God is comparatively displeased with, and abhors even the best works that are performed by the unconverted. The works of wicked men are of four sorts. (1.) Some are such as have notendency to their con-

<sup>u</sup> Gen. iii. 15.

version and recovery, nor to the good of any others, but are either plainly wicked for the substance, or but indifferent for the matter, and wicked in the ends and manner. These God abhors in the highest degree. (2.) And there are some that are common civil actions, in themselves neither good or evil. But yet, because the common ends of such are wrong, and the manner sinful, these therefore are said to be abomination to the Lord. (3.) And then there are their best works which are done by them with evil intents, to settle them in their present state, without any thoughts of turning from it, as their alms-deeds which are done to merit, or to quiet their consciences in a sinful state, or the like. These also God abhorreth, for all the good that is in them. For these they do as wicked men, wickedly, for all the goodness that is in the action. (4.) But then, there are some actions of the unconverted, that are in order to their conversion, and these God accepteth not, so as to accept their persons, as of one reconciled to him in Christ, nor as he accepteth the works of his people, nor so as to be engaged by promise for their reward. But yet he so far accepteth them, that they are ordinarily the way in which he will be found; and in which he will give them greater things. They are means of his appointing for the conversion of their souls, which he hath not appointed them to use in vain. So that by this time you may see my meaning here in this particular. The three first sorts of the works of wicked men, God doth plainly abhor, even their works that are both such for matter and end; and their civil and natural works, that are wicked for the end; and their religious works, that are wicked for the end. But the fourth sort, which are works that are done in order to their conversion, though they please not God as the works of the regenerate do, yet he abhorreth them not as he doth the rest: for as they come from a common faith, though not from a special faith, so they may please God in a common manner, though not in a special. And as they have an end that is good in its place; that is, the saving of their souls by turning from their sins, though they have not the true ultimate end of the saints; that is, the glory and pleasing of God everlastingly, and the enjoyment of him therein, so are they proportionably acceptable to God. So that it is the first three sorts of action that I mean in this

application. And in regard of them, I say it is a matter of great terror to the unconverted, that God abhorreth all that they do.

I will first prove it to you, and then shew you the terror of it. As for their wicked works, there is no question, they are abominable to God, and he hateth them. See Jer. lxiv. 4. Psal. liii. 1. 14. Ezek. xvi. 52. Tit. i. 16. Prov. viii. 16. xi. 1. 20. xii. 22. And the "very thoughts of the wicked are abominable to him," as Prov. xv. 26. But the question is of their better works. And we find in Scripture, that their very trades, and works of their callings, are sin. The "ploughing of the wicked is sin<sup>x</sup>;" or if perhaps the sense of that text may be that their preparations and contrivances are sinful, which are metaphorically called ploughing, yet of their best works the Scripture is plain. The "sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is his delight<sup>y</sup>." Note, that he saith not, the humiliation or the repentance, or thoughts of conversion that may be in a wicked man, but his sacrifice, which is somewhat that he thinketh God should accept, as a matter of worth. And therefore it was that Cain's sacrifice was abhorred, when Abel's was accepted. And that you may see that it is not only because of the wicked designs that they may have in it, the Spirit of God speaketh of both. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination, how much more when he bringeth it with a wicked mind<sup>z</sup>." Yea, the very prayer of wicked men is abominable. Yet do not say that God is a respecter of persons, and will take that well from one, which he hateth from another without any just cause. For there is just cause. If you will not do the main things that God requireth, he careth not for the rest. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination<sup>a</sup>." The law of God commandeth you to take another course, and condemneth your wicked life, and if you will turn away your ear from this law, that would turn away your heart from sin, God will not accept your prayer. "If I regard iniquity in my heart God will not hear my prayer<sup>b</sup>." "He that calleth on the name of the Lord, must depart from iniquity<sup>c</sup>." Yea, the

<sup>x</sup> Prov. xxi. 4.<sup>y</sup> Prov. xv. 18.<sup>z</sup> Prov. xxi. 27.<sup>a</sup> Prov. xxviii. 9.<sup>b</sup> Psal. lxxvi. 18.<sup>c</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 19.



fasting and self-afflicting of the wicked, is disregarded<sup>c</sup>. Little doth a poor blind sinner think when he is boasting of his praying and religious duties, that God abhorreth them; but if they be unconverted, they will find it so. “Ye are they that justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts<sup>d</sup>.” For that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God. And one reason is, because that the person himself is such as God doth hate; and therefore no wonder if he hate his works. For a fig-tree beareth not thorns and thistles, nor the bramble grapes, but as the tree is, so is the fruit. “Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity. The wicked is made for the day of evil, and every one that is proud in heart, is an abomination to the Lord<sup>e</sup>.” Though men bless, yet the Lord abhorreth them<sup>f</sup>. When he seeth their wickedness, he abhors, even those that profess themselves his people<sup>g</sup>. Yea, and his own sanctuary, and the very place of his worship<sup>h</sup>. Especially when they often deal falsely with him<sup>i</sup>. And no wonder when wicked men do loathe the Lord and his service, if he do also loathe them. “My soul loatheth them, and their soul also abhorreth me<sup>k</sup>.” Sinners, the case in a word is this: God is a Spirit, and will be worshipped in spirit and in truth, and such worshippers only doth he choose; and wicked men can give him but the shell, and the shadow of his service. God made all things for himself, and will accept of nothing but what is intended for himself. But wicked men are turned from God, and do all for their carnal selves, even when they pretend to do it for God. It is your hearts that God hath lost, and your hearts that he regardeth, and your hearts he will have again, or he will have nothing; but you may even keep all to yourselves if you will, except you will give him this. What need hath God of your prayers, or other services, or what good can you do him by all? It is yourselves that he desireth, and then he will accept your service, though he need it not, and will make it good to you, though it can do no good to him. Therefore this is his first demand: “My son, give me thine heart<sup>l</sup>,” and if you deny him this, you deny him all. He careth not

<sup>c</sup> Isa. lviii. 2, 3.<sup>d</sup> Luke xvi. 15.<sup>e</sup> Psal. v. 5. Prov. iv. 5.<sup>f</sup> Psal. x. 3.<sup>g</sup> Deut. iii. 19.<sup>h</sup> Lament. ii. 7.<sup>i</sup> Psal. lxxviii. 59.<sup>j</sup> Zech. xi. 8.<sup>k</sup> Prov. xxiii. 26.

for your lips, nor your religious duties, without it. If you will not first give him yourselves, he will not accept of any thing that you offer him. And, indeed, when it is not in a returning way, but in an offering way that wicked men will serve him, he plainly telleth them it is in vain, and telleth them he hateth it, and bids them keep it with them; for he will have none of it till they leave their sins, and give up themselves to him. “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me? saith the Lord: I am full of your burnt-offerings. When you come to appear before me, who required this at your hands, to tread in my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination to me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with, it is iniquity, even the solemn meetings: your new moons, and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth, they are a trouble to me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood. Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord <sup>m</sup>.” If a prince have subjects, that are in rebellion, he will not take any gift at their hands, till they come in themselves: no more will God at your hands. There is no true minister of the Gospel, but feeleth some exposition of this in his own heart. If the people would send us any tokens of their love and expressions of kindness, if it were not for exasperating them, who would not return it them with contempt, as long as they refuse to be reformed, and will not yield to the word of the Gospel? To let go their goods, if it were all they have, for us, is a matter that we regard not, if they will not let go their sins; because we seek not theirs, but them: and much more is it so with Jesus Christ. If you should be as punctual in his worship as any, and give him never so much of your knees or tongues, yea, or your goods, and all you have, he will not take it as a thing that pleaseth him, unless withal you give him yourselves. “If I suffer my body to be burnt,” saith Paul, “and have not love, it availeth nothing <sup>n</sup>.” Many a poor unconverted wretch considereth not this, that comes

<sup>m</sup> Isa. i. 11—14.<sup>n</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

constantly to church, and receiveth the sacrament, and useth some kind of praying every day, and thinks, that if God should not accept of such as them, there should almost nobody be saved ; and therefore he makes no question of his acceptance. O but one thing is necessary, and that is yet wanting. If God had your hearts first, then he would take the rest in good part : but when the world hath your hearts, and though you sit and hear with some delight, as if you were his people, yet your “ heart goeth after your covetousness <sup>p</sup>.” When your fleshly pleasure and profit have your hearts, God will not regard your service, were it much more.

Now it is the work of conversion to bring the heart to God, that was never brought to him, and set upon him before : therefore till this work be done, all is but abominable. “ For without faith it is impossible to please God <sup>q</sup>.” You think to live to the flesh, and then to please God by your good praying and meanings, or by being of the right religion, or by some good works ; but remember what God himself hath told you, who best knoweth what it is that pleaseth him ; “ They that are in the flesh cannot please God <sup>r</sup> ;” and all that are unconverted, are said to be in the flesh, because they “ mind the things of the flesh,” and live according to their carnal inclinations, and for carnal ends. O what a sad consideration would this be to your hearts, if you did but understand and feel your own condition ! You talk against this man and that man for being of a wrong religion, and you think you are better than this party or that, whereas you are miserable, whatsoever your religion be, because you are heartily of no religion. You think God will be pleased with your service, and it doth but add to the load of your sin. You read the word, and think you do God service by it, when you do but read your own condemnation, because you have your hearts against the doctrine that you read. You think you serve God by coming to church, but if you refuse to let the word convert you, how should God be pleased with such a service as this ? It is as if you should tell your servant what you have for him to do, and because he hath given you the hearing, he thinks he should have his wages, though he do nothing of that which you set him to do. Were not this an unreasonable servant ? Or would you

<sup>p</sup> Ezek. xxxiii. 31.

<sup>q</sup> Heb. xi. 7.

<sup>r</sup> Rom. viii. 8.



give him according to his expectation? It is a strange thing that men should think that God will save them for dissembling with him; and save them for abusing his name and ordinances. Every time you hear, or pray, or praise God, or receive the sacrament, while you deny God your heart, and remain unconverted, you do but despise him, and shew more of your rebellion than your obedience. <sup>4</sup>Would you take him for a good tenant, that at every rent-day would duly wait on you, and put off his hat to you, but bring you never a penny of rent? Or would you take him for a good debtor, that brings you nothing but an empty purse, and expects you should take that for payment? God biddeth you come to church, and hear the word; and so you do, and so far you do well: but withal, he chargeth you to suffer the word to work upon your hearts, and to take it home and consider of it, and obey it, and cast away your former courses, and give up your hearts and lives to him; and this you will not do. And yet you think that he will accept of your service. Dare you plead such services with God for a reward, and say, 'Lord, though we shut thee out of our hearts, yet we gave thee the hearing.'

Sirs, I beseech you lay this well to heart, What will you do in a day of affliction? What will you do at an hour of death? Will you not fall a praying? Will you not call to God for mercy, when you see that nothing but his mercy can relieve you? Why, if you be unconverted, God will not hear your prayers; he abhorreth them, because he hath not your hearts. O sad case for a man in misery to look about him, and see no hope in heaven or earth but God alone, and when he begins to cry for help to him, he will loathe their prayers, and turn away his ears, and will not hear! Hear his own word, Prov. i. 26—29. "Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched forth my hands, and no man regarded," &c. to the end of that chapter. For my part, I foresee the day is coming, when I would not take all the world to be without a God to pray to. O then, to have a man's prayers themselves thought but iniquity, and charged on him as his sin, when he must have present help or perish, what sadder case can there be? For a man that is going into another world, and calls to God to receive his soul, to have prayers and soul cast out together, how sad a case is it?

Sirs, do not mistake me, as if I took you off from prayers or other holy duties by this; but I tell you, that if you go on in any kind of duty, and remain unconverted, you cannot look that God should take any kind of pleasure in them or in you. If you say then, 'It is as good never a whit, as never the better:' I answer, do your great duty first, and then all the rest will be accepted; yield to the word and Spirit, resist not the grace of God any longer; give him your hearts, and give them no longer to this deceitful world; and then come and welcome. And for the duties that tend to conversion, as, hearing the word, and begging true grace of God, which may convert you, and considering of those truths that must be the instruments to do it; these are the very beginnings of the work, and therefore it is not these that we discourage you from: it is time for you to use these, that the rest may be accepted.

6. Another sad consideration, concerning the state of an unconverted man, is this, as long as they remain in that condition, They live in continual danger of damnation. They are under the wrath of God; and though patience have long forborne them, to try whether they will repent, yet are they not sure whether it will stay for them one day longer: they are under the curse of the law, and when it will be executed they cannot tell. I have told you already from the word of God, that an unconverted man cannot be saved, and I need not tell you sure, that he is uncertain how long he shall continue in this world. And methinks a man that is sure to go to hell if he dieth, and knoweth not whether it may not be this day, should have little comfort in his life till he were changed. Now the Lord have mercy on poor, hard-hearted sinners, what do they mean then that they look no more about them? Why will not the word of the living God awaken them, which telleth them how near they are to perdition? I do here make known to you from the word of truth, that if there be any unconverted souls in this assembly, they are not certain to be out of hell an hour. God knows, sirs, I would not tell you of this if it were needless. But alas! what do you mean to continue in such a case as this? As sure as the word of God is true, every soul that goeth unconverted out of the body, is shut out of all hope of mercy for ever, and entereth into a remediless misery. Remember then,

man, in the name of God, every morning thou arisest, and every night thou liest down, that thou art uncertain to be out of hell till the next day. Alas! it is enough to amaze a poor Christian, that is indeed converted, when he doth but find himself in doubt of it; how much more should it awaken them that are yet in the flesh? Many a one that truly feared God, having wanted assurance at the time of death, O how terrible hath it made death to them! To look before them and think they must be gone, and they know not whither; to think that it is but one day or two more, and my soul will be among angels or devils, and I know not which of the two it will be! O what a dreadful thought is this, even to many that are converted, for want of assurance at the time of death! But alas! this is but a small matter in comparison of the case of the unconverted: for as soon as the soul is out of the flesh, all the fears of the godly are at end, and they shall never more have a doubting thought; but for the rest, if you should die with never so great confidence, death would dispel it all; and as soon as you were out of the body, your eyes would be opened to see that which would never let you have a thought of hope or comfort more. I speak none of this of myself. “When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish; and the hope of the unjust man perisheth<sup>s</sup>.” “For what is the hope of the wicked, though he have gained, when God taketh away his soul? Will God hear his cry, when trouble cometh upon him<sup>t</sup>?” “So are the paths of all that forget God, and the hypocrite’s hope shall perish; whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider’s web. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand; he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure<sup>u</sup>.” “The eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost<sup>x</sup>.” Take this home with you then, and let it cause you to have no rest till you are truly converted, that till then you are never certain to be one day or hour more in safety.

7. From all this you may see another sad consideration, which is, That as long as a man is unconverted, he hath no ground for one hour’s true peace or comfort, but hath reason to live in continual terror, and to be the grief of all that know his misery. For should a man be merry that is in such a

<sup>s</sup> Prov. xi. 7.    <sup>t</sup> Job xxvii. 8.    <sup>u</sup> Job viii. 13. 18.    <sup>x</sup> Job xi. 20.



case as this? O no, if his eyes were opened, it would certainly affright him, either out of his sins, or out of his wits. Many worldly vanities and sensual delights such men may have, to delight their thoughts; but this is their weakness, and not their happiness. Some malefactors when they are to be hanged, will make themselves drunk beforehand, that death may not be terrible to them; but this is but a medicine against repentance, and not against hell. So do thousands of poor sinners make themselves drunk with merry company, and false conceits, and worldly businesses, and fleshly pleasures; but though this do ease their hearts awhile, and keep away the feeling of their misery, it will not do so long, but only till the hope of cure be past. Brethren, the desire of my soul is to advance the consolation of the saints, and to take from you no peace or hope, but what death will take from you, if it be not done before; and if I had any hopes that your merry days would last after death, and would not end in everlasting sorrow, I would not be one that should interrupt your mirth. Truly you should hold on in your careless, drowsy course for me, if I did not see the after-reckoning; but seeing the case is such as I have proved, with all that are unconverted, I must say to all in that condition, that mirth is very unsuitable to your state, and laughter doth ill become you. And if ever a man might say of it, as Solomon, 'Thou art mad,' it is when it appeareth in the face of such a man that stands all the while on the very brink of hell. What! be merry in the power of satan, under the wrath of God, before you are pardoned, and before you know whether ever you shall be saved, or escape the everlasting pains of hell? O doleful mirth! What wise man would be partner with you in such pleasure? Now sirs, I beseech you that are in this case, for your poor souls' sake, when you are next among your merry companions, let this thought come into your mind, 'O, but I am not yet converted.' When you are next in your worldly cares and businesses, or careless of your souls, bethink you then, 'O, but I am not yet converted.' And every day and night wherever you are, whatever you do, O think still, 'I am yet unconverted;' that so you may look about you, and come to yourselves, and get into that condition, wherein you may have cause indeed to be merry. Methinks

every time you hear the bell toll, it should frighten you; every time you go among the sick, or see any brought to the grave, it should frighten you: yea, every thing that you look on, should be matter of terror to you till you are out of this condition. Sure there is no believing friend that you have that knows your case, but must needs pity you. They are bound to lament you. Only this comfort doth yet remain, that a sufficient remedy is provided in the blood of Christ, which will recover you, if you do not proceed to make light of it. This is all your comfort, that your case is not remediless, as long as you are under the calls of grace. Take heed, in the name of God take heed, of going on any longer in that condition, lest you make it remediless; there is yet a possibility of your salvation, but not without your conversion; you have to do with a merciful God, and that you find by experience, or else you had not been here now. But O go not out of the reach of mercy: never did God's mercy save one unconverted soul, any other way than by converting them. And the greater are your possibilities now, and the more freely the blood of Christ is offered you, the greater will be your sorrow if you lose all this, and by neglecting it, do make your case remediless.

8. Consider further, The warnings that the unconverted have of their danger, are so many, and so great, that if they be neglected, they will multiply their misery. To be an unconverted man among the Turks or heathens, is no wonder, any more than to be in the dark at midnight. To be unconverted among Papists, is not so much wonder, any more than to miss your way by moonshine: but to be unconverted in the midst of Gospel-light, this is a sin that hath no excuse, and a misery that liveth in despite of the remedy. All the preachers that have told you of your misery, and persuaded you to return, shall be witnesses against you: yea, all the examples of the wicked that have gone before you, that were set forth for your bettering, shall be witnesses against you. The way to hell is a beaten road, and most of the world do tread it continually; and therefore you might have known and avoided it, when God had told you how to know it. God hath not left you in darkness, but you shut your eyes; the light shines round about you, and you will not see; you have Bibles, and you have other good books, and

you have teachers, and you may have neighbours that are able and willing to help you, but you will not make use of them. O sirs, consider I beseech you, to get well to heaven, is a business and not a play. It is a matter to be inquired after, and prayed for, and learned with all diligence and care, and not to be put off with heartless shews. Hear then, O hear the call of God that soundeth in thine ears, to bring thee to conversion: wilt thou run on when God is calling after thee? He calleth by his word; he calleth by his ministers; he calleth by his judgments, and by his mercies, by conscience, and by his Spirit; and will you stop your ears, and slight them all? Many an one hath come in at the first call that ever they had by the preaching of the Gospel, and you have had an hundred and an hundred, and yet will not return! Believe it, sirs, the calls of God will convert you, or confound you: his word will not return in vain: you cannot resist his grace after all this warning, at such easy and cheap rates as many others in the world may do. Your impenitency and wilfulness hath the more obstinacy in it, by how much the greater light you do resist. If the Gospel do not convert you, you will wish you had never heard or read it. Hear what Christ himself saith of those that were not converted by his word. "Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your word, when you depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet; verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city<sup>y</sup>." Christ did upbraid the cities where his works were done, because they repented not: "Woe to thee Chorazin, woe to thee Bethsaida, for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they had repented long ago, in sackcloth and ashes; but I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And thou Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee<sup>z</sup>, &c.' The Lord grant that I may never hear Christ upbraiding any of this congregation with the warnings that they did neglect. It is a heavy case, that when Christ sendeth to men the Gospel of salvation, they must be upbraided with it, be-

<sup>y</sup> Matt. x. 14, 15.<sup>z</sup> Matt. xi. 20—23.



cause they would not be saved by it. And that Sodom and Gomorrah, those places of abomination that bore the most remarkable plagues of God, being consumed with fire and brimstone from the Lord, should yet speed better in the day of judgment, than many of our poor people that sit under our teaching from day to day. In a word, sirs, remember this, all unconverted sinners that so lived and died, shall be condemned, but those that had the greatest means and warnings, shall have the greatest condemnation.

9. Consider further, That the further men go on in an unconverted state, the deeper is their sin, the harder is their cure, and the greater will be their punishment. It is not a state wherein you may safely abide, no, not a day, if you were sure to have time for repentance. Is it a small thing to go on in sin, and to add to that heap that is so great already, and to increase that mountain which is so insupportable? As long as you are unconverted, you live in the continual abuse of God, and all his mercies : you abuse him most unworthily, for you prefer the unworthy creature before him, as if he and his glory were no better than this earth, nor so good neither : you abuse him by denying him that which is his own ; you deny him your hearts ; you deny him your service ; that which he hath made and redeemed ; you deny him that which none can lay claim to but himself. You abuse his word by rejecting it ; you abuse his sabbaths by profaning them ; you abuse his image in his servants by contemning it ; you abuse his name by taking it in vain ; you abuse his mercy, and all his creatures by beholding them in vain, and receiving them in vain ; and by advancing them into the throne, and giving them that which is not their due : though you worship not sun and moon, yet you worship meat, and drink, and ease, and money : and thus you live in the abuse of all things, and besides the rest, you abuse your own souls. They were made for the High God, and fitted to love him and honour him, and live to him here, and to see his face in glory hereafter ; and all unconverted men do abuse them to the basest drudgery of the devil : they make them sinks of sin, and dunghills to receive the excrements of the earth. God hath advanced you above the beasts that perish, and made you for a life with angels in his glory, if you would but believe it, and set your hearts

upon it: and you debase your own souls, and make them brutish, as if they had no better a happiness than a swine! or as if you were worms that live in the earth; or rather beetles that live in dung. Who can marvel, if a carnal man abuse God, and the godly, and all things else, when he wilfully and delightfully doth so abuse himself? It may turn the passion of those they abuse into compassion, when they consider, whatsoever they do against others, they do an hundred times more against themselves: they scorn us, and they wound themselves: they tempt others to sin, but they cast themselves into it: they wrong our names, or estates, or bodies, and they damn their own souls. Alas, poor wretches, who would have thoughts of revenge on such men that are the most cruel persecutors and destroyers of themselves? O what a base indignity do they put upon a noble and immortal soul, to make it like the body, inclining unto earth, as if it had been taken hence as the body was, to take it down from living upon God, and engage it in a life of mere vanity!

Moreover consider, that all the while you continue unconverted, you grow hardened in your sin; and as you forsake God more, so doth his Spirit withdraw from you: and custom will still make you worse and worse. Your recovery will be harder the next week than this, and therefore it is not a state to be continued in: but of this we shall speak, when we come to the particular exhortation.

10. As long as you remain in an unconverted state, you Deprive yourselves of a world of happiness, that God doth offer you, and you might possess. You might have God instead of the creature; and Christ instead of a carnal self; and the Spirit instead of the devil that doth deceive you: you might have holiness instead of the filth of wickedness; and justification for condemnation; and a blessing for the curse; and the state of reconciledness, instead of the enmity that you are in to God: you might have peace of conscience instead of terrors or groundless security: you might serve a better master now and in better company; and have better wages both here and hereafter. You do not know what you lose every day that you remain unconverted, more than all the pleasures of sin can afford you. Ask any of them that have escaped out of that condition that you are in, whether

they are willing to return? You see not perhaps that they have got any thing by the change, and therefore you think you lose nothing by continuing as you are; but their gains are out of sight: it is almost out of their own sight, and therefore it may well be out of yours. But if themselves should deny it, it is not therefore an uncertain or contemptible thing; for the foundation of God standeth sure; he knoweth who are his. If it were but to be employed upon higher things, and to escape the deadly wounds of conscience which you give yourselves, or else prepare for, it is no small gain to be a true believer; and if they found themselves in no better a case than they were before, they would be tempted to return to their former state; but that they will not do for a world. I dare say, if you did know but the danger and horrible misery of the life that you now live, you would make as much haste out of it, as a man would do out of a house that was on fire over his head; or as a man that was at sea in a leaking vessel, that if he did not bestir himself as for his life to get it to the shore, would sink and drown him. And if you knew but the case of a converted soul, even of those that walk most heavily, and most bewail their own condition, you would not be out of it one day longer, if you could possibly help it. Well, I have shewed you what it is to be unconverted: if any of you dare yet go on in such a case, and unbelievably cavil at the word of God, or carelessly trample it under your feet; if God do forsake you and leave you to yourselves, and if death do find you in that sad estate, you may thank yourselves.

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## CHAPTER V.

HAVING said thus much to you by way of terror, if it may be to drive you from an unconverted state, I shall not so leave you; but shall next say somewhat also by way of allurements to draw you to a better state. For as there is enough in your misery to drive a sober man from it, so is there enough in the hope that is set before you, to draw any believing heart to embrace it. The Gospel is a joyful message, and bringeth glad tidings of salvation to all that entertain it; if you will not shut your eyes by unbelief, or incon-



siderateness, you shall see that God calls you not to your hurt or loss. ★ If there be not more to be had in his service than in the service of the world, the flesh, or the devil, take your course, and never regard me more. If I do not give you sufficient reason to prove to you that you may make a better bargain by speedy conversion, than by continuing in your carnal, unconverted state, I am contented that you never more give me the hearing: for my part, I would not persuade you to your hurt or loss, nor make such a stir about an uncertain gain; nor about a small matter, were it never so certain: but my principal arguments are yet behind. Fear is not the principal affection of a true convert; and therefore terrifying arguments are not the principal means; yet these must be used, or else God had never put such an affection into man's heart; nor such terrifying passages into his word: and we all feel the need and usefulness of it; for in reason he that is in danger should know it. But yet, it is love that must be the predominant affection, and therefore it is the discovery of the amiableness of God, and the wonderful gain that comes by godliness that must be the principal argument that we must use with you. For we know that men will not be directly affrighted into love, though they must be affrighted from the contrary that hindereth it: do not think that God hath no better argument to use with you, than to take you by the throat, and say, 'Love me or I will damn thee.' Thus he will use to wean you from the contrary love, and to let you know the fruit of your folly, that he may equally carry on his work upon all the affections of your souls together. But he that principally requireth your love, doth give you undeniable reason, why you should love him: and he that calls for your hearts, doth shew you that which might take with your hearts, and effectually win them, if your eyes were opened to see what he sheweth you. He draweth them as the loadstone doth the iron, by the force of his attractive love. If there be not more in God that is worth your love than in all the world, if all were yours, then hold on your present course and spare not. But why make I any comparison in such a case? It were a dangerous irreverence in me, but that your necessity requireth it; because wicked men do not only make a comparison first, but also prefer the world before God, though

not in their tongues, yet in their hearts and lives : if I were but able to make you thoroughly know what that condition is that I persuade you to, I would desire no better argument to prevail with you ; were it in my power but to open your eyes to make you know what conversion is, and what it doth for those that have it, I should make no doubt of your speedy conversion : for none withdraw their hearts from God, but for want of knowing him ; and none are against a holy life, but those that understand not sufficiently what it is : and none do prefer this world, and the pleasures and profits of it before the glorious things that God doth offer them, but only they that are cheated and bewitched by it, and know not what it is that they dote upon. If I were but able to give you such a sight as Stephen had, (Acts vii, 56.), when he saw the heavens opened, and Christ standing at the right hand of God, I should have no need to call you from your fleshly vanities. O how contemptuously would you throw away your former pleasure, and run to see and be possessors of that glory ! If I could but bring you with Paul into the third heaven, to see the unutterable things that every true believer shall possess, I would give you no thanks to cast off this world, and presently to turn to God. Nay, if you had but the light about you that Paul had at his conversion, it would do much : but what talk I of these extraordinary things ? If you did but know by a sound belief such as all the converted have, what a blessed life it is that we invite you to, away you would come without delay ; as the apostles when Christ called them from their trades and friends, and bid them follow him, they presently left all, though they saw nothing in the world to draw them on ; so would you, if you were but well illuminated. And because all that I can do in this work, is to propound to your understandings the excellency of that condition which I persuade you to, I shall next fall upon that, and leave the issue to God, desiring him to open your eyes, to see what shall be propounded.

1. When a sinner is converted, he is delivered from the power of satan, Acts xxvi. 18. The bonds of your captivity will all be broken in your return to Christ, as Peter's chains fell off him, and the prison doors were set open, when the angel raised him up, (Acts xii. 7.) ; so will it be with thy soul when God converteth thee. Ignorance and wilfulness in

fleshly pleasures, and the love of this world, these are the chains that satan holds men in; and conversion will bring thee "from darkness to light," Acts xxvi. 18. Even from the "power of darkness into the kingdom of Christ," Col. i. 13. It will bring such a marvellous light into thy mind, as thou never hadst before, which will make thee marvel at the riches of grace and glory, and marvel at the wonderful love of God, and wonder at that thy former folly that couldst neglect it. Thus will God bring thee "out of darkness into his marvellous light," 1 Pet. ii. 9. Telling you what this light is, will not be sufficient to make you know it, till you see it yourselves. You shall then have other apprehensions of things than now you have, even of the same things which you see and seem to know. You will have another knowledge of the world, and of Christ, and grace, and duty, and all spiritual things, even of good and evil than now you have. As the first sin did open Adam's eyes to know good and evil by sad experience, as having lost the good and felt the evil, and also to know them in a separated sense, as distinct and separated in his thoughts from God; so true conversion will open your eyes to know good and evil by a blessed experience, even to see God the chiefest good, as recovered to you for your felicity; and sin and hell the greatest evils from which you are delivered; and to see God in all the creatures, and the respect and tendency they have all to him. I cannot by bare telling you make you conceive what a marvellous change will be in your understanding; what an excellent and marvellous light you will see, when once conversion hath opened your eyes. Let me endeavour by a familiar comparison to acquaint you with somewhat of it in general, though I cannot give you the thing itself. You know that a dog that liveth in the house with you doth see the same things, and place, and persons in the house as you do; he knoweth every room, and every person in the house: suppose now that God should turn this dog suddenly into a man; do you think there would not be a marvellous change in his apprehension? Would he not see something in every thing, and place, and person to marvel at? Would he not know all these things in another manner than before he did? I do not say, that the change which conversion makes is just of such a kind as this; but it is very marvellous, and



we may by such a similitude help our apprehensions of it. When some of the poor naked Indians have been brought into this land, how strange did every thing seem to them? When they came into London, with what wondering would they gaze about them, as if they had been in another world? And will not a poor converted soul do so, when God hath newly opened his eyes, and made him see that which he never saw before? O then he sees that evil in sin that maketh him wonder! That ravishing love in Christ that maketh him wonder! That amiable glory in the face of God, and that truth in the promises of eternal blessedness, that makes him wonder! When before he could see nothing to wonder at in any of them. Oh! sirs, if you knew but the pleasure of this marvellous light that God by conversion would let into your souls, you would never rest till you found yourselves converted. Every man hath a natural desire of knowledge, and in a natural way they are seeking after it; and many do even in the use of these means, which should be spiritual, employ themselves but in natural seeking. One man thinks that common learning can help him to this light, and therefore he readeth and studieth day and night; and I deny not but in its place it is good. Another thinks that among this or that party it is to be found, and in the discovery of this or that low opinion it doth consist; but when all is done, it is the great and common truths that are most wonderful, and converting grace that must shew men the glory of them. It is not in rarities of new discoveries, nor strange principles that were never heard of till now, that this light is to be found. But it is in the substance of Christian verity. I tell you, sirs, you that now use to mutter over your creed for a prayer, and hear the catechism without understanding it, if your eyes were opened by converting grace, you would marvel at the very doctrine of the creed and catechism. You would see that excellency, and feel that weight in common truths, that would exceedingly take up your very hearts. You now know not what it is to believe in God the Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost; but then these three words would seem to you of greater glory, than the sun at noon-day; they would find you both work and wonder, and yet delight, if you had no more than these to think of.

And do you love the darkness rather than such light? Have you been so long in the dungeon, that you are fallen in love with it, and are loath to come out? Is all this light so small a matter in your eyes? Are you like an owl or bat that cannot endure the light of the sun? Or rather like a thief that hates the daylight, because he is afraid of being made known? Oh! sinners, I beseech you come away and leave your dungeon state of darkness, and live in the light of the countenance of God. "It is a pleasant thing for the eyes to see the sun<sup>a</sup>." Deprive not yourselves of the pleasure which is offered you.

And it is not only your chains of darkness, but also your wilfulness and blind affections that converting grace will turn you from: these bonds of worldly profits and pleasure that seem so strong to others that they cannot overcome them, you will shake them off as Samson did his bonds; and they will not be able to separate you from the love of God: the same tempter that so easily prevails with others, will not be able to prevail against you; "The God of peace will tread him under your feet<sup>b</sup>." In the work of conversion Christ layeth siege to the heart of a sinner, which naturally is satan's garrison, and he battereth it, and starveth it, and forceth it to yield, "and bindeth that strong man that possesseth it in peace<sup>c</sup>." So he is cast out of his possession by converting grace; he hath not the same power there that he had before; once he could have commanded the man to swear, or be drunk, or neglect his soul, and he would have done it; but now he hath no such power: once he could have turned their thoughts against Christ, and their tongues to cavil against his word, but now he cannot; they are now under another government. They have now that repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth, by which they are recovered out of the snares of the devil, who formerly led them captive at his will<sup>d</sup>. The very first day that you are converted, you are the freemen of Christ, who were the bond-slaves of the devil all your lives before. As ever then you would partake of this blessed privilege, resist no longer, but yield to the call of grace, that you may be converted.

2. Another excellent privilege of a converted soul, is this; As soon as ever a man is converted, he is united or joined

<sup>a</sup> Eccles. xi. 7.<sup>b</sup> Rom. xvi. 20.<sup>c</sup> Luke xi. 21.<sup>d</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 25.

to Jesus Christ. This is the very root of all the rest. Conversion turneth men from satan to God; it breaketh them off from their former lovers, and uniteth them to Christ as the husband of their souls. He is “the vine, and we are the branches, and into him we must be grafted, if we will have life<sup>e</sup>.” He is the Head, and conversion is it that makes us his members; giving us that faith, by which we receive him to dwell in our hearts<sup>f</sup>: so that as the sovereign and subject make one commonwealth; as the head and the body make one man, so Christ and his church are one. Whether or no the union be any more than relative, taking union in the strictest sense; yet it is wonderful and glorious, and a communication of holy qualifications doth follow it. We are one in relation, and one in judgment, as being of the same mind; and one in affection, and one in regard of the similitude of nature, and many ways one in a larger sense. Here is the root of the saints’ felicity. If you were one with the prince, you would not fear the want of honour or riches; you would not fear any thing that he could save you from. When Jonathan loved David as his own soul, he ventured his life to save him from his father’s indignation: when Lazarus, whom Christ loved, was sick, he raised him from the dead. If you be once so near to Christ as to be one with him, what will he not do for you? Will he neglect his own members? Will he hurt himself? The apostle could use this argument with husbands to love their wives, because they are as their own body; and “whoever hated his own flesh? But nourisheth it and cherisheth it, even as Christ doth the church.” From hence doth the apostle fetch the example of conjugal love; “husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church:” yea, from this union; “for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones<sup>g</sup>.” “This is a mystery,” saith the apostle, speaking of Christ and the church<sup>h</sup>,” and a mystery of unspeakable consolation to the saints. O therefore resist not that grace that should convert you. If you would be united to Christ, come to him, and yield to the drawings of his love that you may be one with him, who is one with the Father, according to your capacity, for that is his will, concerning all that are truly converted. Judge now, whether it be not a most ho-

<sup>e</sup> John xv.

<sup>f</sup> Eph. iii. 17.

<sup>g</sup> Eph. v. 25. 28—30.

<sup>h</sup> Ver. 32.



nourable and inconceivable felicity, that conversion doth advance the soul into. It was the greatest miracle of all God's works, that ever he revealed to the sons of men, to take the human nature into union with the divine; that Christ, who was God, should condescend to be made man: and the next is, that he will take his church into union with himself, and will magnify his love, in such a wonderful advancement of poor sinners, that without his grace they could not well believe it.

3. Another benefit that followeth conversion, is this; As soon as ever a man is truly converted, he is made a member of the true church of Christ: for he is at once united to the head and to the body. A man may be a member of the visible church, or rather, be visibly made a member of the church before conversion: but that is but as a wooden leg to the body; or, as Bellarmine himself acknowledgeth, they are not living but dead members: and as many of his friends whom he mentioneth, confess, they are but as the hair, or the nails, which are not properly members of the body, though they are in the body. Or, as Austin saith, like the chaff among the corn, which is so a part of the field, as to be an appurtenance of the corn. So that till conversion, even the baptized and the most understanding men, are but as the straw and chaff in God's barn, and as the tares in his field, as Christ himself compareth them. But conversion doth effectually ingraft them into the body, and make them living members; and so "by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body<sup>i</sup>;" and so, "we are the body of Christ and members in particular<sup>k</sup>." "All are not Israel that are of Israel," saith the apostle to the Romans. And "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature, and faith that worketh by love<sup>l</sup>." "For circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter<sup>m</sup>." "They are the circumcision that worship God in the spirit<sup>n</sup>." And it is not the mere baptism of water, but the baptism of the Holy Ghost, which is given in conversion that maketh you living members of the body.

4. As soon as ever a sinner is truly converted, he hath a pardon of all the sins that ever he committed, be they never

<sup>i</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 13.

<sup>k</sup> Ver. 27.

<sup>l</sup> Gal. vi. 5. 15. Col. iii. 11.

<sup>m</sup> Rom. ii. 29.

<sup>n</sup> Phil. iii. 3.

so many, and never so great. Though with Paul he have been a persecutor of the church of God; though he have with Manasseh, been a very sorcerer; though he have hated godliness, and made a mock at it; though his very heart hath been against Christ all his days; yet when he is once truly converted, he is pardoned. Though he have spent the flower of his youth in vanity; though he have been a drudge for this world, and forgotten his soul, and the world to come; though he have hindered others from conversion and salvation; yet when he is once truly converted, he is forgiven. Though he have long resisted grace, and strove against his own salvation; though he have stifled many convictions of conscience, and broke many purposes and promises, and much abused the patience of God; yet, if the work of conversion be true, all this shall be pardoned and done away. For the Lord Jesus hath made satisfaction for all; and thereupon hath made a conditional promise, that all that truly repent and believe, shall be pardoned: and as soon as ever they perform the condition through his grace, the promise becomes effectual to them, and their iniquities are therein forgiven them.

O what news is this to a weary, heavy-laden sinner; to them that are bruised and broken under the sense of sin and wrath, that would give a world if they had it, for a pardon! Why, come to Christ, sinner, and take it freely. He hath purchased it, and he freely offereth it; but only to them that take himself: for God hath made these benefits appurtenances to himself; take Christ himself, and all is thine. O what comfort is it to such a sinner as Mary, that lay wiping Christ's feet with the hairs of her head, and washed them with her tears, to hear him say, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." Those sins that do so terrify the conscience, and those that lie asleep till conscience be enlightened; thy secret sins, which the world knoweth not of, and thy open sins that have been thy shame, at the very hour of true conversion will be pardoned. All thy sinful thoughts, words, and actions; sins against knowledge, conscience, consideration; sins of ignorance, and presumptuous sins, all shall be done away°. "Whom he calleth, them he justifieth P." "Christ is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and for-

• Acts xxvi. 18. Mark iv. 12.

P Rom. viii. 30.

givenness of sins<sup>q</sup>." And thus doth "he bless them, in turning them from their iniquities<sup>r</sup>;" and in turning away from them the punishment of that iniquity. He that sent John Baptist first to preach "repentance, for the remission of sins<sup>s</sup>;" and hath shed "his own blood for the remission of sins<sup>t</sup>;" and calleth men to repent for that end<sup>u</sup>;" hath promised to give it to all that thus repent and believe in him, and are converted to him<sup>x</sup>; and commanded his ministers to join these together, and "that repentance and remission of sin be preached in his name<sup>y</sup>." And may we not say with David, and after him with Paul, that they "are blessed whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered, and to whom the Lord will not impute sin<sup>z</sup>?" O therefore receive converting grace, that you may be made partakers of this blessedness. Take the counsel of Peter to Simon Magus, "Repent of thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thoughts of thy heart may be forgiven thee<sup>a</sup>." Or as the same Peter to the Jews, "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out<sup>b</sup>." O blessed hour that freeth the soul from such a load, that else would have sunk it as low as hell! A day and a mercy that must never be forgotten by us.

5. Another benefit is this; As soon as a sinner is converted, he is reconciled to God: the former enmity is done away: though this be in substance the same with the former, yet doth it shew us our happiness in another consideration. A future reconciliation was purchased before by the blood of Christ, and a conditional reconciliation given out in the Gospel; but the soul was never actually reconciled till the time of conversion. Before, a sinner did either presumptuously intrude into the presence of God to his own danger, or else fled back through the terrors of his conscience. Oh! the frowns of the face of God, were enough to deter a guilty soul! What comfort could that man have to think of God, that lay under his continual curse and wrath? But when once they are converted, the face of God then smileth on them, and his arms are open to embrace them, as the father's were to the returning prodigal. God cannot shew himself

<sup>q</sup> Acts v. 32.<sup>r</sup> Acts iii. 26.<sup>s</sup> Mark i. 4. Luke iii. 3.<sup>t</sup> Matt. xxvi. 28.<sup>u</sup> Acts ii. 38.<sup>x</sup> Acts x. 43.<sup>y</sup> Luke xxiv. 47.<sup>z</sup> Psal. xxxii. 1. Rom. iv. 7.<sup>a</sup> Acts viii. 22.<sup>b</sup> Acts iii. 19.



pleased with a graceless, carnal soul ; nor can he choose but be reconciled to the soul that is once possessed of his image, and reconciled unto him. As you are, so will he be to you. He did but stay for the turning of your hearts, that you might be fit to receive that kindness from him, which you are not fit for in the bondage of your sins. This is the happiness of a converted soul, that he hath the love and favour of Almighty God. Therefore doth Christ call them his friends<sup>c</sup>. And what is it that he will not do for his friends, that did so much for us while we were enemies<sup>d</sup>. O therefore yield to the calls of God. The word of conversion is a word of reconciliation ; and this it is that he hath committed to us, that we might “ beseech men in his name and stead to be reconciled to God<sup>e</sup>.” Which is only by being converted to God. Did you know the worth of peace with God you would quickly yield to return unto him.

6. Another precious benefit to the converted, is, That they are the adopted sons of God ; which is a step higher, than to be barely reconciled and his friends. When they are planted into Christ the natural Son, they become adopted sons. For “ God sent his own Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons ; wherefore we are no more servants only but sons<sup>f</sup>.” This is a benefit not common to all. It is as “ many as are led by the Spirit of God that are his sons<sup>g</sup>.” And they that are in their measure “ blameless and harmless, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom they shine as lights in the world<sup>h</sup>.” Christians, know your own felicity, that you may rejoice in it, and give glory to God. You may boldly draw near him, and call him your Father, and look for the love and bounty of a Father, at his hands. O wretched world, to despise so great a mercy as this is ! Doth it seem a small thing to them to be the sons of God ? It raised the blessed apostles into an admiration : “ Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God<sup>i</sup>.” And as a Father tendereth a son that he delights in, so doth the Lord the poorest of his

<sup>c</sup> John xv. 13—15. James ii. 23. <sup>d</sup> Rom. v. 10.

<sup>e</sup> 2 Cor. v. 18—20.

<sup>f</sup> Gal. iv. 4, 5, 7.

<sup>g</sup> Rom. viii. 14.

<sup>h</sup> Phil. ii. 15.

<sup>i</sup> 1 John iii. 1.

people. The world, I told you, is divided into the children of God, and the children of the devil. And it is by conversion from sin to God, that men are known to be the children of God. If, therefore, you value this wonderful privilege, yield then to the grace of God, which would convert you.

7. Another benefit of the converted, is, That they have the Spirit of Christ within them. By it doth Christ possess and govern them; by it doth he make them like to himself, and work out all that is contrary to his holiness. For it is a cleansing Spirit, and a Spirit of holiness<sup>k</sup>. By this he helpeth them against the flesh, and effectually mortifieth it<sup>l</sup>. By this doth he quicken them to newness of life; for it is a “quickeningspirit<sup>m</sup>.” By this it is that “he helpeth their infirmities, and teacheth them to pray<sup>n</sup>.” By this he “teacheth them his law, and writeth it in their hearts<sup>o</sup>.” By this he possesseth them with filial affection, and causeth them to “cry to him, Abba, Father<sup>p</sup>.” By this one Spirit, all his people have access to him<sup>q</sup>. And by this they are made his habitation<sup>r</sup>. And in the unity of this Spirit, they are one with the Lord, and among themselves<sup>s</sup>. This Spirit is the earnest of their future glory<sup>t</sup>. And where this Spirit is, there is liberty from former slavery<sup>u</sup>. So that you see how great a mercy it is to have the Spirit of Jesus Christ within us; and this is the case of all that are converted, and none but them. “For if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, the same is none of his<sup>x</sup>.” If you did but know what it is to be possessed by the Holy Ghost, when ungodly men have the spirit of uncleanness, you would not rest without this blessedness.

8. Another part of the happiness of the converted, is, That all the promises of grace are theirs. They are the children of the promise, and God is, as it were, obliged to them, and hath engaged his word for their security<sup>y</sup>. All the promises are in Christ, yea, and amen<sup>z</sup>. They, therefore, that are in Christ, must needs have part in them. O how full is the book of God, of free and precious promises to his peo-

<sup>k</sup> Rom. i. 4.<sup>l</sup> Gal. v. 16, 17. Rom. viii. 1, 2. 14.<sup>m</sup> Rom. viii. 11,<sup>n</sup> Rom. viii. 26. Eph. vi. 18. <sup>o</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 3.<sup>p</sup> Gal. iv. 6.<sup>q</sup> Eph. ii. 18.<sup>r</sup> Eph. ii. 22.<sup>s</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 17. xii. 12, 13.<sup>t</sup> 2 Cor. i. 22. v. 5<sup>u</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 17.<sup>x</sup> Rom. viii. 9.<sup>y</sup> Gal. iv. 28. iii. 22. Eph. iii. 6.<sup>z</sup> 2 Cor. i. 20.

ple! and all belong to thee that art converted. There hast thou promises for remission; and promises for assistance against temptation; and promises for acceptance of thy person, and duties; and promises for protection and deliverance from evil; and when thou readest them, thou mayst say ‘all those are mine.’ He that knoweth that God is true, will not take a promise as an inconsiderable mercy. If men account it such a matter to have a lease, or deed of gift of land, and worldly riches, how should we value that covenant and testament of our Lord? In a word, “Godliness is profitable to all things; having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come<sup>b</sup>. And what can any man desire more?

Yield therefore to the voice of grace, that you may be converted, and all the promises of grace will be yours: and then it will be an unspeakable comfort to you, that whatsoever condition you are in, you have a promise of God that you shall be better. If you be in poverty, if in sickness, if at the hour of death, yet you have a promise, which is enough to support a believing soul. As one saith, ‘I had rather be at the bottom of the sea with a promise, than in paradise without it.’ For there is no misery so deep, but we shall certainly be delivered from it, if we have but a promise. But without it, Adam was not safe in innocency.

9. Another benefit of the converted, is, That all their duties are pleasing to God. I mean not their sins, nor the failings of their duties; for God will never be reconciled to these, when he is reconciled to the sinner. But the failings of all their duties are forgiven them, through the blood of Christ; and the failing being forgiven, the duty is accepted and well-pleasing to God. “By faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts. By faith Enoch had this testimony that he pleased God<sup>c</sup>. The “sacrifice of their good works is pleasing to him<sup>d</sup>.” Their “prayer and alms-deeds come up before him; for in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him<sup>e</sup>.” And it is their study and work to do those things that please him, and walking in all pleasingness is

<sup>b</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 8.

<sup>c</sup> Heb. xi. 4, 5.

<sup>d</sup> Heb. xiii. 16.

<sup>e</sup> Acts x. 4. 35.



accepted of him<sup>f</sup>. And all this is through Christ in whom the Father was first well pleased<sup>g</sup>. O how great a consolation is this to the saints! See that you be truly converted, and go to God, and fear not lest he reject you further than is necessary to reverence and caution. When he abhorreth the gilded sacrifice of the hypocrite, he will accept that which seemeth weaker from thee. He will hear thy very groans and tears, and broken expressions. Lament over thy weaknesses, and see that thou disown them, and then thou shalt find, that God will not disown thy services for them. O what a comfort is this in a time of extremity, in trouble of conscience, in sickness, and at death, to have God to be well pleased with all our duties, and to know that he will not abhor our prayers. The time is near, Christian, when thou wilt find this privilege more worth to thee than a thousand worlds, that God will let thee come near him with acceptance, and bid thee welcome, and hear thy prayers; and the time is coming when unconverted sinners would give a world if they had it, for such a privilege, and say, O that I could go to God, and have a gracious hearing as well as they! But it will not be, because they knew not the day of their visitation.

10. Another benefit of the converted, is this; The angels of God have a special order and commission to attend them. They are all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation<sup>h</sup>. Note here, that angels are servants, not to us, but to God for us; and that it is in a special manner for the heirs of salvation: and that it seems it is all the angels that are designed to this office. I say not, all the glorious spirits that are before the throne of God. For, I presume not to determine whether there be not other spirits besides the angels; for the word angel signifieth a messenger, and therefore it is only these that are employed as God's messengers, that are called by that name; and those that believe in Christ, are said to have their own angels always beholding the face of God<sup>i</sup>. These doth he send to deliver his servants in distress, as they did, Dan. iii. 21. vi. 22. And Peter, Acts xii. For, "he giveth his angels charge over them to keep them in all their ways, they

<sup>f</sup> Heb. iii. 21. Phil. iv. 18. <sup>1</sup> John iii. 22. Col. i. 10. <sup>g</sup> Matt. iii. 17. xvii. 5.

<sup>h</sup> Heb. i. 14.

<sup>i</sup> Matt. xviii. 10.

shall bear them up in their hands, lest they dash their foot against a stone<sup>k</sup>." Yea, they have their office also for the good of souls. An angel appeared to Christ himself, and strengthened him in his agony<sup>l</sup>. And as evil spirits can hurt the souls of the wicked, so no doubt but the good can help the souls of the righteous; and, therefore, when satan comes to deceive, he is said to be transformed into an angel of light<sup>m</sup>. Yea, when the soul goeth out of the body, these angels are the conductors of it into the presence of God<sup>n</sup>, where we shall be made equal to the angels themselves<sup>o</sup>. O, if the eyes of true Christians were but opened to see their glorious attendance, they would be more sensible of this privilege, and thankful for it, than now they be. God could do all things for us without instruments if he pleased, but as he rather chooseth to work by instruments and second causes for our bodies, so also by these invisible instruments both for body and soul. When Saul had sinned against God, and was forsaken by him, the good Spirit was taken from him, and an evil spirit given him. Some common benefits even common men may have by these angels while they forfeit not their helps, but not that special benefit as the saints. The world cannot distinguish the righteous from the wicked, but the angels of God can; for they must needs know their own charge, and who it is that Christ hath especially committed to their trust.

11. Another excellent benefit of the converted, is this, As they are true members of the catholic church, (whatsoever any schismatics may say to the contrary, that would confine the catholic church to their own party,) so have they communion with the whole church, and many spiritual advantages by that communion. Besides that external communion in church order and ordinances, which the ungodly may have as well as they, there is a spiritual internal communion, which is proper to the living, converted members. All the saints have one Spirit of holiness, to animate them<sup>p</sup>. And they all intend the same end, and conspire in the same way for the accomplishment. God is their common end, as he is their common original<sup>q</sup>. They have all "one God,

<sup>k</sup> Psal. xci. 11, 12.

<sup>l</sup> Luke xxii. 43.

<sup>m</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 14.

<sup>n</sup> Luke xvi. 22.

<sup>o</sup> Luke xx. 36.

<sup>p</sup> Rom. viii. 9. 1 Cor. xii.

<sup>q</sup> Rom. xi. 36. 1 Cor. viii. 6. 11, 12.

one Christ, one faith," though they may differ in many smaller opinions, and to "every one of them is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ<sup>r</sup>." And so they "are all one body and one Spirit," and must endeavour to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace<sup>s</sup>." They are members of one heavenly city, "even Jerusalem, which is above, the mother of us all," where they shall be perfected<sup>t</sup>. And of the militant church, the city of God, while they are here on earth. It is the design of God in the fulness of time, to gather them all into one, in Christ, yea, to make them and the angels in heaven to be one body<sup>u</sup>. They have here the same officers and means, even apostles, and prophets, and their holy writings, pastors and teachers, and the use of ordinances, and this for the edifying and perfection of the body, "till they all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. That speaking the truth in love, they may grow up into him in all things which is the head, Christ : from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, to the edifying of itself in love<sup>x</sup>."

Moreover, all the whole church doth constantly pray for every member ; not only as for those that are yet unconverted, that they may have grace, because they have no absolute promise to be heard in that ; and that they shall not be heard for all men in general, they are certain, and therefore may not so ask it. But when they pray for the godly, it is as for those for whom they have a promise. As they live in the constant love of one another, which is the mark by which the world must know them, and an effect of the Spirit which doth animate the whole body<sup>y</sup>, so doth this love express itself in the breathings forth of constant desires for the prosperity of the whole, and each part. O Christians, what an excellent privilege is this, that the poorest man or woman of you that is converted, hath thousands and thousands of the prayers of the saints going for you to God from

<sup>r</sup> Eph. iv. 5—7.<sup>s</sup> Eph. iv. 3, 4.<sup>t</sup> Heb. xii. 22, 23.<sup>u</sup> Eph. i. 10.<sup>x</sup> Eph. iv. 12, 13, 15, 16. <sup>y</sup> 1 Pet. i. 22. 1 John iv.

7, 8. John xiii. 34, 35.



day to day. Which way ever you are going, or whatsoever you are doing, this stock is improving for you, this work is going on. When you are about other matters and think not of it, there are thousands of holy people praying for you. When you grow cold and faint in prayer, there are thousands of fervent Christians at prayer for you. When you have caught a fall, and conscience is troubled, and you dare scarce go to God again, there are thousands of Christians that are at prayer for you, that have clearer consciences and boldness with God. Is not this a comfort when your graces are weak, when temptations are strong, and troubles, and fears, and doubts are many, to remember you have thousands of the people of God at prayer for you? Is not this a great comfort in the greatest dangers, when you are afraid of your salvation, to remember how many thousands are at prayer for your salvation? Nay, it is even all the whole church of God. And you may well think that God will not easily deny the prayer of his whole church. He that hath promised to hear two or three, yea, every single person, that asketh any thing in the name of Christ according to his will, is unlikely to deny his whole church, when they join together for any such thing. And this is a matter that is according to his will, that his truly converted people should persevere, and be preserved in his love, and safely brought on to his heavenly kingdom<sup>z</sup>. O remember this in your doubts and troubles, that all the church of Christ is daily at prayer with God for your salvation. And is not this a great comfort to you; in time of sickness, or at the hour of death, to remember, that now the whole church of God is at prayer for you? You send to this friend and that friend which you think have interest in God, and you are glad if you can but get them to pray for you. How glad then should you be, that all the church prayeth for you, who most certainly have so great an interest in him? The spirit of prayer, which teacheth the people of God to pray, will not forget you, nor suffer them to forget you, but will make them pray for all the body, and every member of it; as the very tenor of the Lord's prayer sheweth you, and Col. i. 3. Eph. vi. 18. Col. iv. 3. 1 Tim. ii. 1. Rom. i. 9. xv. 30. O then, sirs, if you be wise, yield to that grace of Christ that would convert you, that you may

<sup>z</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 18.

be members of this body, and live in the spiritual communion of it. For, alas ! to join externally in the communion of the church, when you have not communion with them in the Spirit, will but increase your condemnation at the last. You are every day among the saints of God, but you know them not, nor the Spirit by which they live, nor the spiritual part of the work which they do. Such a communion as the dead corps have together which you tread upon (whose bones and dust lie mingled in the earth) in comparison of our communion that are here together in the presence of God among the living ; even such a communion have the unconverted in the visible church, in comparison of that spiritual communion with the people that are converted.

12. Another excellent benefit to the converted, is, That they have the constant intercession of Jesus Christ, God and man, in his heavenly priesthood, at his Father's right hand in the heavenly glory. Their head is not insensible of their wants, nor doth he disregard them ; the wrong that is done you, he takes as done to himself. " Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ?" said he to one that trod upon his foot<sup>a</sup>. And the good that is done to you, or denied to you by others, he takes as done or denied to himself, as may be seen in Matt. xxv. 40. 45. Surely then he doth not forget us, though he be exalted to his glory. He is not like the poor silly creatures, that cannot bear exaltation without being puffed up, and forgetting themselves ; yea, their friends and their God. No ; his exaltation is spiritual and heavenly, perfecting his human nature to the greatest height that it is capable of : he liveth in the face of God who is love ; nay, into the personal union with the Godhead which is love, hath he assumed our nature long ago ; he was never more tender of Jerusalem, when he wept over them<sup>b</sup> ; or of his people when he wept, and bled, and died for them, than he is now of them in his glory. Though he cannot weep or grieve now as he did on earth, yet he can love now as much as ever he loved ; and therefore his eye is still upon our wants, his heart is set upon us for our good, he looks down from heaven upon every particular member ; he seeth that this man wants this grace, and that man wants that, and the other is in danger of this or that corruption or temptation ;

<sup>a</sup> Acts ix. 4.<sup>b</sup> Luke xix. 41.

and he is daily carrying on the cure. It is he that sends this minister and the other minister as his apothecaries, with his medicines, and persuadeth you to take them for your good ; it is he that directeth this or that affliction to be a purge for some dangerous disease, when he seeth that easier means prevail not. You see not your chief Physician, he standeth out of your sight ; but he seeth you, and it is he that doth all for you that is done : as he prepared a medicine of his own blood to cure sick souls, while he was here upon earth, so he is now continually applying it to them for their cure. Do not think that all his love was shewed upon the cross, or that all that he doth for you by his blood was then done ; no : he is still pleading as it were that blood on your behalf unto his Father, and offering the sacrifice for you again in the holiest, which he once offered for you on the cross ; and is there a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek <sup>c</sup>. And “because he continueth ever, he hath an unchangeable priesthood ; wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them <sup>d</sup>.” “For as by his own blood he entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption : so shall this blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge our consciences from dead works to serve the living God <sup>e</sup>.” For Christ “is not entered into the holy place made with hands, which is the figure of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God, for us <sup>f</sup>.” For “after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever, he is sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till his (and our) enemies be made his footstool ; for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified <sup>g</sup>.” So that we have a perfect high-priest that perfectly loveth us, who is representing our case before his Father, and pleading a perfect sacrifice for us ; and through him it is that we ourselves have “boldness to enter into the holiest, even by his blood, by the new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, even his flesh : for, “having such an high-priest over the house of God, we may draw near in full assurance of faith,” if we have a “true heart

<sup>c</sup> Heb. viii. 1—4.    <sup>vii</sup> S. 11. 15.

<sup>d</sup> Heb. vii. 24, 25.

<sup>e</sup> Heb. ix. 11. 14.

<sup>f</sup> Heb. ix. 24.

<sup>g</sup> Heb. x. 12—14.



sprinkled from an evil conscience, as our bodies are washed with his baptismal water<sup>h</sup>.” O what an unspeakable comfort is this, to every truly converted soul! The Son of God is at prayer for thee, Christian. If thou think that God will not hear thy own prayers; no, nor hear the whole church’s prayers; dost thou think he will hear his Son’s prayers, or not? The poor man that was born blind, could tell that “God heareth not sinners,” that is, unconverted sinners; but “if any man be a worshipper of God, and doth his will, him he heareth<sup>i</sup>.” How then can he choose but hear him that had no sin? and hear him that taketh away the sins of the world? He that said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased, hear him;” will sure hear him himself, because he is so. He telleth his Father, “I know that thou hearest me always<sup>k</sup>,” and it is not only his common intercession for his common salvation, which he giveth to the world: for so, when “he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered among the transgressors, and bare the sins of many, he made intercession for the transgressors<sup>l</sup>.” And said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And so he procureth them a conditional pardon and salvation, with the means and mercies that have a tendency thereto. But it is the special intercession for that special grace which he communicateth to none but his living members. Read that excellent prayer, John xvii. which he putteth up to the Father for his own, and remember that these requests are for you, and that it is for all that shall believe in him through the world that he thus intercedeth, verse 20. O what a comfort is it to a poor Christian, that in his greatest infirmities, and deepest sense of unworthiness, he hath the beloved of the Father to take his prayers and present them to God, and to plead his cause more effectually than he can do his own. What say you then to this, you that are yet in the flesh, and unacquainted with the life of grace; would you have a Saviour to speak for you to the Father? Yea, one who hath all power in heaven and earth committed to him, and “is able to save to the uttermost, all those that come to God by him.” O yield then speedily to converting grace, and rest not till this work be wrought upon your

<sup>h</sup> Heb. x. 19—22.<sup>i</sup> John ix. 31.<sup>k</sup> John xi. 42.<sup>l</sup> Isa. liii. 12.

souls: this blessed state may be yours as well as other men's, if you do not now neglect it and refuse it.

13. Another excellent benefit to the converted, is, That God hath assured them that all things are theirs, and shall work to their good. The promise is expressed, 2 Cor. iv. 15. 1 Cor. iii. 21. Rom. viii. 28. Not that they have a propriety in other men's possessions in civil respects; but finally, other men, and their possessions, and all the world are for their good. As the world at first was made for Adam and his offspring, so is it redeemed from ruin for the second Adam and his offspring, in a special manner; the earthly proprietors shall have it in possession, and many of them not have a thousandth part of the benefit by it as others that possess it not: the physician hath his skill in his own profession: but the patient that is recovered by it, may have more benefit by it than he that possesseth it: the whole frame of heaven and earth are in perpetual motion for the glory of the saints; are all conjoined by the overruling Providence, and are carrying on the same design of God, when they seem at the greatest odds among themselves. When the instruments themselves are unacquainted with their own employment, and know not what it is that they are doing, yet God knoweth, who seeth and ruleth them all. The business that God hath in hand is to build the heavenly Jerusalem, to gather to himself the whole number of his elect that are scattered through the world<sup>m</sup>. And to make them a city for his own habitation, and a people for his everlasting praise: and the very persecutors of the church are but now hewing them and squaring them, and fitting them for the building: when God seeth us sick of a pleurisy, he often useth the sword of an enemy to let us blood, which shall as certainly do the cure as the tenderest hand. The medicine knoweth not that it is healing a man's disease; the lancet knoweth not that it is saving a man's life by taking away his blood, but he that useth them knoweth what he is doing. Herod and Pilate, and the people of the Jews thought they had been securing their own seats, and the liberty of their nation, by crucifying one that called himself King of the Jews: they little knew that they were shedding that blood that was to be a sacrifice for the sins of the world,

<sup>m</sup> Matt. xxiv. 31. John xi. 52.

and crucifying that flesh that was given for the life of the world<sup>n</sup>: but God knew what he was doing by them: for, they did nothing but what his counsel had determined should come to pass°. Pharaoh thought he was securing his interest; but God knew he was getting himself glory, and his people a wonderful deliverance by his obstinacy. And even satan himself is as much overreached in his devices and enterprises against the saints as their earthly enemies are. He is but exercising their graces, and driving them to Christ, and honouring the power of his blood and Spirit eventually, when he seeketh to devour them: his temptations do but make them the more watchful: or if they fall, they rise with the greater hatred of sin, and love to Christ, and thankfulness for his blood and pardoning grace, and renewed resolution to walk more carefully for the time to come: O blessed state, where all the world, both good and bad, both friends and foes, both angels and devils are all carrying on the work of our salvation, some with delight, and some unwillingly, some with understanding, and some not knowing what they do! What a state of comfort hath that man, that may be assured that whatsoever befalleth him, shall be for his good, and that all things do work together for the best! I confess I have had myself so much comfort from that one promise, Rom. viii. 28. that I would not have been without it for a world. When I have had no particular discovery of the tendency of a providence, and under affliction, and the appearance of death, have had nothing from below to support me, that one promise hath appeared so full, that I thought if there were no more, it might abundantly supply my soul with consolation: what fear should we have of want, or enemies, of sickness, or death, or any thing that may be terrible to the flesh, as long as we know that all things do but conspire to our salvation? And though none of the wheels in the chariot of providence should know which way or whither they are moving themselves, yet do they all serve to convey us to our glory: it is a matter that is past the belief of the carnal world, but it is a certain, sealed truth, that when the persecutor is treading down and tormenting the poor, despised saints, it is the saint that is the gainer, and all this is for his good, and his ignorant enemy

<sup>n</sup> John vi. 51.

° Acts iv. 28.



is scouring off his rust, and preparing him for his master's use, and for his glory, and is himself the loser, and the miserable wretch, when he is highest in his honour, and deepest in his cruelty, and proudest in his triumphs. Why poor sinners, do not your hearts within you long to be partakers of this blessed state? Is it not worth all that you can do or suffer, yea, worth ten thousand worlds, to be such an one as I have now described to you? Why, you may be such if your own folly and neglect exclude you not, God hath not shut you out of the promise; O do not shut out yourselves by refusing his converting grace.

14. Another most excellent benefit to the converted, is, That they are past their greatest danger, and have done the greatest business of their lives, and now are ready for death and judgment, whensoever it shall come. Not that all danger is over, or all enemies yet overcome, or all their work done, nor that they are yet perfectly ready to die; but the main work is done, and the main conquest of the enemy is over, and the main danger is past, and in the main they are prepared for their change. What had we to do here but to prepare for glory, and in this short and troublesome life to get interest in a better, that shall never end? And with all that are truly converted this is done: at the very hour that God converted them, he made them his sons, he pardoned their sins, and gave them right to everlasting glory: when he gives you Christ, he gives you all things, or puts you into a condition wherein you may well think he will give you all things, Rom. viii. 32. O, happy day! may that man or woman say, as long as they live, when God did translate them out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son! Many keep their birth-days as a day of rejoicing or feasting while they live, when Solomon saith, "the day of death is better than the day of birth<sup>p</sup>." But they that know the day of their new birth may well make that a day of rejoicing while they live. Oh! sirs, what a blessed change doth that one day or hour make, when God shall presently bring up the heart of a sinner to himself, and join them truly to Jesus Christ, and forgive all the sins that ever they did, and give them right to everlasting glory! You are like a man that is pursued by his enemies, and as

soon as ever he can but get into such a castle or garrison, he is safe : so, when you first get into Christ by a living, effectual faith, that very hour were you out of the reach of the prevailing, commanding power of hell ; then was the strong man cast out of your souls ; then were you brought from under the curse of the law, and the wrath of God. If death had found you one hour before that change, you had been damned wretches in hell for ever : and if death should come but one hour after that change, you will certainly be glorified saints with Christ. This is true, sirs, how strange soever it may seem to you : and the reason is at hand, because that the hour before your conversion, you were the members of satan, you were in the flesh, and had no saving interest in Christ or in the promise : and the hour after true conversion, you are members of Christ and children of the promise, and have part in him who is Lord of all. I deny not but you must still “ watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation ;” and for all the “ promise that is left you of entering into rest,” you must “ fear lest you should seem to come short of it<sup>1</sup>.” And you must still stand on your guard in all the spiritual armour, and work and fight out your salvation, and quit yourselves like men to the end : but yet I may well say that the main brunt is over ; the enemy is dispossessed of his chiefest hold ; he that ruled you is now cast out, and though he be not quite under your feet, yet he shortly will be : and your greatest business now is to keep him out and to stand on your defence, and “ keep that you have, that none may take your crown from you ;” and to follow on the conquered enemy, in the pursuit, till none remain : and to “ grow in grace, and perfect your holiness in the fear of God,” and cast out the remnants of your former filthiness<sup>2</sup>. Hearken, therefore, poor sinners, and as ever you are friends to your own souls, neglect not that grace that would bring you into this condition. Would you not think yourselves happy, if it were thus with you ?

15. Another most excellent benefit of the converted, is, That they are the rightful heirs of everlasting glory, and as soon as the soul is gone out of the body, they shall have possession of it : and at the day of judgment they shall have a blessed resurrection, and shall themselves be justified in

<sup>1</sup> Heb. iv. 1

<sup>2</sup> 2 Pet. iii. ult. 2 Cor. vii. 1. xiii. 9. Heb. vi. 1.

judgment, and also with Christ shall judge the world, and so shall be fully possessed of that glory in soul and body, and shall live in the everlasting praise of their Redeemer. Here are many particular benefits, which for brevity I join together. (1.) They are now the heirs of glory, for being the sons of God, they are co-heirs with Christ, though they must follow him in sufferings, before they come to the possession of their inheritance. "The Spirit witnesseth with our spirits that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together<sup>1</sup>." Though now in our minority we differ not from servants, yet "being sons we are heirs of all<sup>2</sup>." When moved with holy fear we prepare the ark, and hide ourselves in Christ by faith, and become the heirs of the righteousness of faith, even then also do we become heirs of the end of that righteousness<sup>3</sup>. When we receive our interest in the promise, that promise makes us heirs<sup>4</sup>. O, brethren, that you could but conceive the greatness of this blessedness, which even the poorest beggar in the world may have that is rich in faith; for even they "are heirs of that kingdom which God hath promised to them that love him<sup>5</sup>." How certainly shall these be partakers of that glory, when they "have finished their course, and fought the good fight<sup>6</sup>." For God hath "laid up a crown of salvation, for all such as love his appearing." And it is conversion that bringeth us into this blessed state, and the unconverted have no part or fellowship in it. See Tit. iii. 4—7. "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour: that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." So that it is conversion that bringeth us into this happy condition: O, therefore, bless God if you find he hath wrought this work upon your souls. Yet be not careless for the time to come, but "let every one of you shew the same diligence to the full assu-

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 16, 17.<sup>2</sup> Gal. iv. 1. 7.<sup>3</sup> Heb. xi. 7.<sup>4</sup> Gal. iii. 29.<sup>5</sup> James ii. 5.<sup>6</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.



rance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them that through faith and patience inherit the promise." And then doubt not, for God hath confirmed your salvation by his oath. "For God being willing abundantly to shew to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath;" saith the apostle, "that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us, which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that which is within the vail; whither Jesus Christ the forerunner, is for us entered <sup>a</sup>."

(2.) Hereupon it follows that whensoever the righteous die, their souls are conveyed by angels into that glory <sup>b</sup>. And when they "depart, they are with Christ <sup>c</sup>." And when they are "absent from the body, they are present with the Lord <sup>d</sup>." Of which they may "be confident as walking by faith, and not by sight, and knowing that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" and therefore may "groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven <sup>e</sup>." And when we die, we may say with Stephen, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit <sup>f</sup>." And were our death as ignominious as the thieves on the cross, yet that day should we be with Christ in paradise, Luke xxiii. 43. O blessed people that live in such a case, so near the door of a more blessed life! How can you endure to be out of this condition of hope and peace, one day or hour? Oh! that you did but know the blessedness that you neglect.

(3.) But yet, this is not all, but the greatest part of the blessedness remains till the day of judgment, and then there are these four benefits to be received. 1. The righteous shall have a blessed resurrection; not the resurrection of damnation, which will be the lot of all the rest; but the resurrection of life, as Christ distinguisheth them, John v. 28, 29. The graves shall be no longer able to detain them, but he that conquered death by his own resurrection, will by the same divine power again overcome it by the resurrection of

<sup>a</sup> Heb. vi. 11, 12. 17—20.

<sup>b</sup> Luke xvi. 22.

<sup>c</sup> Phil. i. 23.

<sup>d</sup> 2 Cor. v. 8.

<sup>e</sup> 2 Cor. v. 1—3, 6, 7.

<sup>f</sup> Acts vii. 59.

his people. And as his natural body hath already triumphed over it, so shall his mystical body at that day: he that made heaven and earth of nothing, will by the same almightiness accomplish this: read 1 Cor. xv. throughout.

2. And being raised and brought to judgment, the next benefit will be their final justification. They have now the justification and pardon of the Gospel, and then they shall have the final justification of the Judge. For he will give to every man according to right, and his promise made this their right through the blood of Christ. For, "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit<sup>g</sup>." Whatsoever sin can then be charged on them, they can answer all by shewing the Gospel pardon in the blood of Christ, and if their title be questioned, they can prove it by their faith and sincere obedience. So all that repent and are converted, will then "have their sins blotted out, when that time of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord<sup>h</sup>." It is not possible that Christ should condemn his own body and condemn those that have believed in him, and sincerely loved him: so dear a friend, so tender-hearted a Saviour, that hath bought us so dearly, and sanctified us and cleansed us, and given us a right to that justification by his promise, cannot possibly condemn us after all this. As certainly as Christ himself is justified, and his promise true, and his love unchangeable, so certainly shall all the converted be then absolved.

3. And not only so, but also with Christ they shall judge the world: for so is the plain word of promise, 1 Cor. vi. 2. Yea, they shall judge the angels themselves.

(4.) And lastly, they shall take possession of their glory; and enter into the joy of their Lord<sup>i</sup>. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, when the wicked are cast into that furnace of fire, where shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth<sup>k</sup>." "He that hath ears to hear let him hear," saith Christ, when he had spoken these words: and he that will not hear such things as these, and regard them, will one day wish that he never had ears, and never had a heart in his breast, or else that it had been better.

Oh! dear friends! that I were but able to make you

<sup>g</sup> Rom. viii. 1.

<sup>h</sup> Acts iii. 19.

<sup>i</sup> Matt. xxv. 21, 23.

<sup>k</sup> Matt. xiii. 42, 43.

know the difference between the righteous and the wicked at that day. Surely I should not need then to say any more to you to make you apprehensive of the necessity of conversion, and to make haste to entertain that grace that is offered you. If the crown of glory be worth seeking, then must converting grace be sought: if an everlasting blessedness with Christ and his holy angels be worth the having, renewing grace is worth the having. Lift up your heads then Christians, and rejoice in the hope that is set before you. O bless the Lord that ever he brought you into the kingdom of grace, which is but the beginning of the kingdom of glory. As sure as your natural birth was your entrance into this natural world, so sure was your new birth the entrance into a better world. For your life eternal was begun when you began to have the saving knowledge of God, and his Son Jesus Christ. He that hath given you the earnest of his Spirit, and who "hath sealed us with the holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, till the redemption of the purchased possession<sup>1</sup>," will doubtless give us the inheritance itself. Fear not, Christian, the Lord that hath promised will not deceive thee, for he never yet deceived any. But as sure as the sun doth shine in the firmament, so sure shalt thou live in the heavenly Jerusalem, and be joined with the holy angels of God in his everlasting praises, and then thou wilt better know than now thou canst do, what God did for thee that day that he did convert thee. I know it is the business of the enemy of thy salvation, if it might be, to draw thee back into thy former state of death and darkness; and when he cannot do that, to rob thee at least of the comfort of thy felicity, that thou mightest doubt, and fear, and live in perplexity, as if thou wert not the heir of glory. Because as he is loath to be tormented before the time, so is he loath that thou shouldst be comforted before the time; but do not thou believe him; suffer him not to hide thy blessedness from thine eyes; O, remember it cannot be loved, if it be not believed; thou wilt lose thy joy and God his praise, if the tempter prevail with thee to deny thy mercy. Believe then, and give God the glory by believing.

16. Another of the blessings of a converted man, is, That

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. i. 22. v. 5.



new life which he hath begun, is a life of health, and peace, and comfort, and the very beginning of his everlasting peace and life; and the more he hath of it, the more happy will his life be. It is not only our suffering that is the way to reigning, and our tribulation by which we must enter into the kingdom of God; but we have also peace the way to peace, and life the way to life, and joy the way to joy and glory. Our tribulation and sufferings are but some accidental attendants of this our militant state; but the life itself consists of other kind of matter. How blessed a life is it to live in so near a relation to God, as is above mentioned! And how pleasant a thing is the believing exercise of his graces! O how sweet is it to live here in any lively beginnings of the love of God! How pleasant is it to know that we are beloved of him! How sweet is it to draw near to him, and plead our cause with him in faith, and to call him Father in confidence through Christ! How sweet is it to live under the power of his ordinances, when by his Spirit he blesseth them to our souls! What a joy is it believingly to think beforehand of their eternal blessedness! And what comfortable communion have the people of God together, and what good doth it do them to hear and speak of the glory that they shall possess! O poor deceived sinners, that think the way of the Lord to be so grievous, and fly from it, as if it were an insufferable toil. Did you but know the safety and the comfort which the life of godliness doth afford, you would be of another mind, and take another course than you do. I do profess to you all in the name of the Lord, that you will never have a safe, nor truly peaceable and comfortable life, till you are converted, and live a spiritual and heavenly life. The joy of the world is sorrow in comparison of that which you might have from Christ. The laughter of a fool doth not so much differ from the highest content of the greatest prince on earth, as your carnal mirth and peace doth differ from that which is fetched by true faith from the face of God, and the life to come. You fly from godliness for fear of sorrow and trouble, and I tell you it is joy and peace that you fly from, and sorrow and trouble that you continue in, and that you are preparing for. Believe the Lord Jesus himself, if you will not believe those that have tried. "Come unto me all you that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will

give you rest; take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light<sup>m</sup>.” “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous<sup>n</sup>.” “Being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access by faith unto this grace, wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God: and not only so, but we glory in tribulation<sup>o</sup>.” “Whom not having seen, ye love; though now you see him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls<sup>p</sup>.” “We are the circumcision that worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh<sup>q</sup>.” “Rejoice evermore<sup>r</sup>.” “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice<sup>s</sup>.” “Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous, for praise is comely for the upright<sup>t</sup>.” “Ye that love the Lord, hate evil; he preserveth the souls of his saints, he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous, and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart<sup>u</sup>.”

What say you to all this now? Is it a life of trouble and misery that God hath prescribed for his people to live in? Is this a burdensome, grievous life? Will you not believe him, concerning his own way? I tell you again, and declare to you from the Lord, that you shall never have any true peace and comfort till you are converted, and lead a holy life. And you that say you shall never have a merry day more, if you leave your sins, and give up yourselves to a life of holiness, I do profess and proclaim to you, that you shall never have a merry life indeed till you do it: I mean, you shall never have that solid and lasting joy, which beseemeth a man of wisdom to regard. Believe the Lord himself that hath told you it twice over; Isa. xlvi. 32., “There is no peace saith the Lord to the wicked;” Isa. li. 21., “There is no peace saith my God to the wicked.” “The way of peace they know not, there is no judgment in their goings; they

<sup>m</sup> Matt. xi. 27, 28.

<sup>p</sup> 1 Pet. i. 8, 9.

<sup>s</sup> Phil. iv. 4.

<sup>n</sup> 1 John v. 3.

<sup>q</sup> Phil. iii. 3.

<sup>t</sup> Psal. xxxiii. 1.

<sup>o</sup> Rom. v. 1—3.

<sup>r</sup> 1 Thess. v. 16.

<sup>u</sup> Psal. lxxix. 10—12.

have made them crooked paths ; whosoever goeth therein, shall not know peace<sup>\*</sup>." I confess, a carnal peace you may awhile maintain, and for a time may have a merry dream, but the day is near, when you will have a terrible awakening. And you may think that the godly have no such joy, because you see it not, or because you see them sad and heavy : but their " joy is such as strangers meddle not with." I know the righteous have many troubles, and are oftener in tears and groans than others ; but that is from the remnants of their sins, which as it consisteth with prevailing grace, so doth that sorrow with prevailing joy, or may do at least. A dead man groaneth not, when a sick man doth : and yet that is no disparagement to life. What is sweeter than life ? and yet sickness may make it grievous ; but we do not therefore prefer death before life, because some are sick : so what is sweeter than the life of grace ? and yet spiritual sickness may make us walk heavily, and yet we do not therefore prefer a death in sin before it. O come and try, sinners, the pleasures that be in the ways of God, and do not for shame speak against them, till you have thoroughly tried them. The Lord himself doth testify of them, Prov. iii. 13. xxi. 20. " Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding ; for the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies : all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared to her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that retaineth her." You see then that conversion is the beginning of consolation.

17. Another of the privileges of the converted, is this ; As he hath cause of continual joy, so no evil that can befall him, is a sufficient reason to lay by these joys, as to the habit at least, and the prevailing degree. I know that so far as we have sin, we may, we shall, we must have sorrow : but then, so far as we have that sin pardoned and mortified, we may, we should have greater joy. And because a converted man hath no unmortified, unpardoned sin, therefore his cause of joy is greater than his cause of sorrow. Though yet

<sup>\*</sup> Isa. lix. 8.



I must say, that there are seasons when sorrow must be most expressed, as in days of humiliation, and in great falls, and in some afflictions; yet habitually then our joy should be the greater, though it be not the season to express it. But my special meaning here is about the evil of affliction, which is sanctified to the godly, and hath lost its sting, and is turned by a hand of grace to their advantage. Should not that man live in continual joy, that is the heir of heaven, and a friend of God, and a member of Christ, and doth but wait for the hour of death to be possessed of that unspeakable, endless glory? What should trouble the heart of him that is escaped out of the power of satan, and the greatest trouble, which is the wrath of God, and the danger of everlasting misery? That which may torment the heart of another day and night, even the thoughts of the endless flames of hell; this is not only taken out of his way, but turned into the matter of his joy and praise, to think but of the fearful misery that he hath escaped. O what heart that hath received a pardon of all sins, and is saved thereby from the everlasting torments, can choose but daily rejoice in that salvation? Would not a Judas have been glad, while he was hanging himself in despair, if any one would have given him assurance, yea, or but hope of that salvation? Go to any despairing sinner, or any one under the terrors of the Lord, and ask them whether or no they would be glad if they could but be assured that they should escape that misery which they fear? You need not doubt what answer they would give you. They would be glad, and a thousand times glad; much more if you could assure them of an everlasting glory, instead of that deserved misery. O then, what a blessed state are all those in that are truly converted! How many times doth the mouth of Christ pronounce them blessed! "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for their's is the kingdom of God<sup>y</sup>." What case soever that man be in that is the heir of heaven, he cannot choose but be a blessed man. If any thing might make him seem miserable, it would be to be persecuted and hated, and made

the scorn of the world; and yet Christ saith, that even then he is blessed; and biddeth them even then “rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you.” That man that hath a reward in heaven, may be exceeding glad, whatsoever befall him here on earth. Will a prince be troubled for the loss of a farthing, or the barking of a dog? That man that hath not clothes to his back, nor a house to put his head in, nor a good word from any about him, and yet hath assurance of living in glory with God and his holy angels, as soon as ever he is gone out of the flesh, I think is a happy man in the eye of reason itself. And he that professeth to have assurance of such a glory, and yet liveth not comfortably in every condition, I will not believe him, whatsoever he profess. Sure I am the great monarchs and princes of the world, when they are parting with their crowns, would be glad to have assurance of the everlasting crown, on condition they had lived as poor as the vilest beggar on the earth. There is not the stoutest gallant and proudest sinner but would be glad to change states with the poorest saint, when he seeth the end. O, but they must be wise in time, that will be ever the better for their wisdom. Balaam could say, “O that I may die the death of the righteous, and that my last end may be like his<sup>z</sup>.” All the world would say at last as the foolish virgins, if it would do any good, “Give us of your oil, for our lamps are out<sup>a</sup>.” Who would not be a saint, when he is past the pleasure of his sin, and cast off by the world, which deceived him in his prosperity?

Methinks the greatest men on earth should tremble in the midst of all their glory, to remember the everlasting misery that they are near, if they be not living members of Christ, as Belshazzar did in the midst of his joviality<sup>b</sup>. And methinks the poorest true believer should have his heart abound with joy, to remember the things that God hath promised him, and which he must certainly ere long possess. O think not what you are, Christians, but what you shall be. Yet a little while, and you shall groan, and weep, and complain no more: you shall not know what poverty, or trouble, or any other sufferings do mean. You are almost past all your sorrow, as the unconverted are almost

<sup>z</sup> Numb. xxiii. 10.<sup>a</sup> Matt. xxv. 8.<sup>b</sup> Dan. v. 6.

past their joy. O what difference is between their part and yours; between the good things which they have here, and the portion which you have there! Is it not better go by the dunghill to the everlasting crown, than by a fading crown to everlasting torments? They will forget their honour and delicious fare, when they want a drop of water to cool their tongues; and you will forget your present sorrow, when you are in Abraham's bosom, or in the presence of the Lamb. If one day in the courts of God on earth seemed better to David than a thousand elsewhere, what will an endless life in glory seem to a believing soul? O sirs, we want nothing but soundness of faith, and spiritual life and seriousness to make our hearts to leap within us, and to make our lives a foretaste of heaven, and to make us pity poor worldlings in the height of their vain-glory. What should be a terror to that man that hath overcome the prince of terrors? That hath God on his side, that hath a promise of everlasting life, and that hath evidence to shew for his interest in the promise, and a lively faith to improve it, and live upon it? Methinks if the devils should appear to him in his way; if they should walk before him in the ugliest shape, he should but look upon them as conquered miscreants. Methinks if he were passing by death from this world, it would be a joyful hour to him, that is presently to step into a world of glory. And now, dearly beloved neighbours and friends, I beseech you for the Lord's sake, hear these things, as men that believe the word of God. Is it not a thousand pities, that God should offer you such consolations as these, and you refuse them? Is it not a thousand follies that you should neglect such a blessed state as this, when it is set before you? God hath made you for high and excellent things, even to live with angels in the heavens in glory. Yield but to the work of converting grace, and see that Christ be formed in you once, and all is yours. These things are far off you, and out of sight, and therefore seem strange to flesh and blood, and carnal hearts will not believe them; but they are true as the living God is true. The souls of all the converted that are dead in Christ from the beginning to this day, are now in the possession of that glory that I am speaking of. They see it, though we do not; and we shall see it, if unbelief and neglect do not hinder us: believing is the



only way to seeing and possessing. I told you before what a miserable case it is that every unconverted sinner is in, that he is not sure to be safe an hour; and would you not be out of that state? Would it not be a blessed state for you to be sure that you shall live with Christ an endless life? Then you may challenge death with Paul, "O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Then you may challenge all the world, even earth and hell, as he did. "If God be for us, who shall be against us? It is God that justifieth, who shall condemn? Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall life or death," &c. I do here proclaim to you in the name of the Lord, that you may have this blessedness if you will be converted, and that without conversion it will never be had. Get once into this state, and you may have cause to joy as long as you live, and far greater cause when your present life is ended. I tell you, a true converted man is never in so sad or low a case, but still he hath more matter for his joy than for his sorrow. O therefore do not set light by such a happiness, and choose not to yourselves a life of terror, when you may have better if you will.

18. Another great benefit of the converted, is this; The longer they go on, and the further they proceed, the greater will be their felicity: the case of the wicked, is, the longer the worse; but the case of the converted, is, the longer the better: when a wicked man hath had the sweetness, it may kill his heart to think what a bitter cup is kept for the last: but when the godly have had the bitterest here, it may sweeten all to think of what remaineth. If a wicked man should have never so much trouble in the flesh, there is another kind of trouble to be endured hereafter: the worst of their condition is still behind; but the best is still behind with the converted: you shall have what is good for you here; you shall have pardon of sin, and peace with God through Jesus Christ, and access to him in peace, when other men are shut out; and help in your distress, and strength in your temptation: but all this is as nothing in comparison of that which is yet to come. You know partly what you have, but you know not what you shall be, but only in general, that when Christ appeareth, you shall be

<sup>c</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 55.

<sup>d</sup> Rom. viii. 31. 33. 36.

like him<sup>e</sup>. Your glory is not within the sight of flesh and blood. You walk here as other men in the same frail flesh, and compassed with infirmities, and as men of sorrows; and the world knoweth not that you are the children of the God of heaven, and that you shall reign with him in glory: for the heir in his minority differeth not to outward appearance from a servant<sup>f</sup>; but yet by right he is lord of all: no wonder if it be thus with you, for so it was with your head the Lord of all: he was found in shape as a man, and there appeared no worldly glory or comeliness in him, for which he should be desired, but was despised, and became a man of sorrows, bearing our iniquity, and the chastisement of our peace<sup>g</sup>. But he that was, among men, of no reputation, was worshipped by angels, and dearly beloved by the Father, and for his humiliation is highly exalted, and hath a name given him above every name, and hath seen of the travail of his soul, and been satisfied<sup>h</sup>. And so it is also in their measure with his members; for if you suffer with him, you shall also reign with him; and if you be made conformable to him in his death, so shall you also be in his resurrection and glorification<sup>i</sup>. Though your way to heaven may seem uneven and troublesome, yet still the further you go, the nearer you are to it; and though sometimes you must pass through the valley of the shadow of death, where the place of your happiness may seem out of sight, yet still you are going on towards it; and the foul way as well as the fair, is the way to heaven, and the waves and storms shall help you to the harbour. Though you be delivered to death for Jesus' sake, it is that the life of Jesus might be manifested in you. And though you always bear about in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus, it is that his life may be manifested in your bodies<sup>k</sup>. "For we know that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, will also raise us up by Jesus; for which cause we faint not; for though our outward man perish, yet our inward man is renewed day by day: for our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that

<sup>e</sup> John iii. 2.<sup>f</sup> Gal. iv. 1.<sup>g</sup> Phil. ii. 7, 8. Isa. liii. 2—4.<sup>h</sup> Phil. ii. 7, 9, 10. Isa. liii. 11, 12.<sup>i</sup> Rom. viii. 17. vi. 5. Phil. iii. 10, 11. <sup>k</sup> 2 Cor. 10, 11.

are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal<sup>l</sup>." Great cause therefore have we to "groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed with our house, which is from heaven, that immortality may be swallowed up of life<sup>m</sup>." As Christ was nearer his glory on the cross, and in the grave than before, when no man laid hands on him; so are his members in the last of their afflictions: for though the last enemy, death, must yet be encountered with, yet he also shall be overcome through the strength of him that hath conquered him for us; and who through death destroyed him that had the power of death<sup>n</sup>.

O sirs, if there were but this one thing to shew you the difference between a converted and an unconverted state, methinks it should sink down into your hearts, that the last day of the ungodly is still the worst, because that all endeth in their eternal misery; and the last state of converted souls is still the best, because all will end in everlasting glory. Careless sinners do seem to have some merry days for awhile; but O, how will they answer that question of Peter's, "Judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinners appear?" "Their ways do now seem right in their own eyes, but the end thereof are the ways of death<sup>p</sup>." "O that they were wise to consider this, and that they would remember their latter end<sup>q</sup>." The not considering of their end, is the cause that it proveth so miserable<sup>r</sup>. But the end of a believing, holy life is another kind of end. "Mark the upright man, and behold the just, for the end of that man is peace. But transgressors shall be destroyed together; the end of the wicked shall be cut off<sup>s</sup>." "For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man, what God hath prepared for them that love him<sup>t</sup>." And this end is not far off: we have but a little while to wait, and we shall see the Lord upon the throne of his glory, and see the accomplishment of his promise to his saints. "For yet a lit-

<sup>l</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 14, 16—18.

<sup>o</sup> 1 Pet. iv. 17, 18.

<sup>r</sup> Isa. xlvii. 7. Lam. i. 9.

<sup>m</sup> 2 Cor. v. 2, 4, 7.

<sup>p</sup> Prov. xiv. 12. xvi. 25.

<sup>s</sup> Psal. vii. 37, 38.

<sup>n</sup> Heb. ii. 14.

<sup>q</sup> Deut. xxxii. 29.

<sup>t</sup> 1 Cor. li. 9.



tle while, and he that cometh will come, and will not tarry <sup>u</sup>.” It is many ages since the apostle said, “ the end of all things is at hand <sup>x</sup>.” “ Seeing therefore all things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness <sup>y</sup>.” O therefore yield to that grace that would convert you. Conversion is the first gate, and an holy life the way to heaven. Though this gate be strait, and this way be narrow, and few find it, yet the end is it that will pay for all : as ever you would have this blessed end, see that you make this happy beginning.

19. Yet this is not all; but besides all these benefits to yourselves, Conversion will make you useful to others : it will make you become a blessing to the place where you live : as a wicked man hath a curse upon him, so usually he is a curse to others ; and judgments many times follow him, and those about him may fare the worse for his sake. And as a true Christian hath a heart full of the blessing of God’s right hand, and is himself a blessed man, so is he usually a blessing to others, and many fare the better for his sake. As you may see in the case of Joseph, Gen. xxxix. 3. 5. While you are ignorant and ungodly, what are you but hinderers of other men’s salvation ; and temptations to those about you ? But when God hath illuminated you, and changed your hearts, you will be forward to do good to others, and to help them to that life and hope, which you have received. If they want instruction, you will be more able to instruct them : if they are ignorant or careless, you will have some words to say to them for the awakening of their souls : if they be in danger, you can tell them of it ; and you can go to God, and pray for them in their distress : you have a spirit of prayer which you had not before ; and you have interest in God, which you had not before, and therefore you may speed better for others, though not so certainly as for yourselves. I tell you, sinners, the stoutest of you all may be glad of the fellowship of a godly man, if it be but for the benefit of his prayers. Jeroboam that did stretch forth his hand against the prophet, was glad to beg his prayers, for the restoring of that hand <sup>z</sup>. And Simon Magus was glad to crave the prayer of Peter <sup>a</sup>. A few more

<sup>u</sup> Heb. x. 37.

<sup>x</sup> 1 Pet. iv. 7.

<sup>y</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 11.

<sup>z</sup> 1 Kings xiii. 6.

<sup>a</sup> Acts viii. 24.

such as Lot was, might have saved Sodom from the flames, when his ungodly neighbours were the cause of that heavy judgment. You are made the fitter for to do God's service, when you are converted, for that is it that maketh you his servants; this is it that bendeth your hearts and thoughts to God, and causeth you to devote yourselves, and all that you have to him, and therefore you can never do him acceptable service till this work be wrought. That is the most happy and honourable nation, that hath most of these converted people in it. Let the world think of them as basely as they please, it is these that are the honour and safety of your country, and of your towns and parishes, and of the families where they live. If England be any better than the nations of infidels, it is by the godly. If the Lord would make this town to abound more with true converts and godliness than any other, I dare say, it would be a happier town than any other. I tell you that is the best place where there is most of the fear of God; that is the best family in the town that hath most true converted persons in it; or where those that are, are the most eminent in holiness. Were there but such hearts within you, that you would all agree together to yield to the saving work of the Gospel, and set yourselves in good earnest to the work of your salvation, this would make you the happiest, the most honourable place in the world. Every good man is a common good: their light shines abroad to others, and such light will not be hid: the heat of their graces doth help to warm others, and happy are they that live near them, and have but the opportunity of conversing with them, so they have but hearts to improve such opportunities.

20. If all this be not enough to shew you the blessedness of the truly converted; consider in the last place, That it is not only to themselves, nor only to the world about them, that the comfort doth redound, but the heavenly host of God do in some sort partake of it. For the Lord Jesus telleth us, "there is joy in heaven at the conversion of a sinner that repenteth<sup>b</sup>. Harken to this all you that live a worldly, fleshly life; it would be the very joy of angels to see your true conversion; and will you rob them of their joy? They know what good this change would do you, when you do

<sup>b</sup> Luke xv. 10,

not know it ; and therefore they have compassion of you in your misery, and it would rejoice them to see your recovery. O that you did believe this, and that you did consider it. Can you find in your hearts to stand out any longer, when you consider how many would be glad of your conversion ? Turn then, O turn to Christ poor sinners, and make glad the very angels of God by your returning.

Yea, more than so. 2. The Son of God himself would rejoice at your conversion. For the recovery of sinners is the fruit of his blood ; and when he “ seeth the travail of his soul, he will be satisfied.” He that came into the wilderness of this world to seek such lost and scattered sheep, doth bring them home with joy, when he findeth them<sup>c</sup>. “ He came to seek, and save that which is lost<sup>d</sup>.” “ He came not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved<sup>e</sup>.” Though he must and will condemn them, if they reject his salvation. Nothing pleaseth him better than the conversion and salvation of straying souls : or else he would never have done so much to accomplish it as he hath done. He would never have sent abroad the doctrine of salvation, and established a ministry in the church to that end, if a returning sinner were not his delight. O that you knew, sirs, how welcome you would be to Christ after all the wrong that you have done him, if you would but speedily and heartily return. Those arms that were nailed open upon the cross, are still ready to embrace a returning soul. He that had tears to weep over his enemies in their obstinacy<sup>f</sup>, hath joy for them that return from their impenitency. He that would have gathered Jerusalem, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing, if they would have been gathered<sup>g</sup>, doth shew what kind and tender welcome repenting sinners should find with him. If you had but hearts to repent, you would find that Christ hath a heart to receive you. I have formerly told you how tenderly he would meet a poor sinner half way, and fall upon his neck, and comfort his broken heart, and forget his miscarriages, and never hit him in the teeth with his sin ; as the father did by the returning prodigal<sup>h</sup>. If you did but know the worth of Christ’s embracements, and tender love that he hath to shew toward you, you

<sup>c</sup> Luke xv.

<sup>d</sup> Luke xix. 10.

<sup>e</sup> John iii. 17.

<sup>f</sup> Luke xix. 41.

<sup>g</sup> Matt. xxiii. 37.

<sup>h</sup> Luke xv.



could not find in your heart to stand out so long. You would rather be in your Saviour's arms, than among the swine where you have nothing but the husks. Can you find in your hearts to delay your return, and to despise this love? In the name of God take heed what you do; for I must tell you, if you are so barbarous, and will so abuse that grace that would save you, you will find that he hath wrath as well as grace; and the Lamb of God is a lion to his enemies, and will slay those without mercy, that would not have him rule over them, nor accept of his mercy<sup>i</sup>. Abuse not mercy too much, lest it turn to unavoidable indignation. For "our God is also a consuming fire<sup>k</sup>." And "if his wrath be kindled, yea, but a little, then blessed are they that put their trust in him." Then blessed are they that were converted by his grace, for only they shall be saved from his burning indignation, and be made partakers of the kingdom of his glory.

By this time you may see, if you be not wilfully blinded, that when we persuade you to be converted, we are not drawing you into a miserable life; and that it is no ill bargain, which we offer you from the Lord. If I had nothing to plead with you, but the danger of damnation, I might justly expect you should believe and tremble, and yield such obedience as fear alone can cause. But I could not expect that you should receive it with love, nor yield the delightful obedience of the saints. But now you may see that we move you, not to your loss. I dare say I have shewn you enough to win the heart of any man that is not obstinately blind and wicked. If you would be rich, I have shewed you the only riches; if you would be honourable, it is only conversion that can make you so; if you would have pleasure, I have shewed you the way to pleasure, and how you may be possessed even of your Master's joy. In a word, if you would be happy, I have shewed you the only way to happiness; a life of peace and safety hath been offered you; a life of honour and pleasure hath been offered you; and remember that it was offered you. If you refuse it, remember you might have been happy if you would. You might have lived with the image of God upon your souls, and the Holy Ghost within you, and the everlasting kingdom a little be-

<sup>i</sup> Luke xix. 27.<sup>k</sup> Heb. xii. 29.

fore you, and with the eye of faith upon the promise of it in the word, and the eye of hope upon the glory that is promised. With the love of God in your hearts, now breathing after him in holy desires, which, when you have reached him, and are come to him, will turn into those endless and inconceivable enjoyments. You might have lived here in the spiritual communion of the saints, in the spiritual and fruitful use of God's ordinances, the chariots to convey your souls to life, and that glass in which you may see the Lord; you might have been much freed from the terrible gripes of conscience which the guilty feel, or certainly shall feel; and secured from that sin that "lieth at the door<sup>1</sup>," and from all the everlasting misery that now waiteth for you. In a word, instead of a life of brutish sensuality and folly, and slavery to satan, and preparation to eternal torment, you were offered that life which consisteth in "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost<sup>m</sup>". Beloved hearers, I now beseech you, in the name of the Lord, that you would not wilfully refuse to be happy; and that you would not neglect so great salvation. Our office obligeth us to invite you, and to be earnest with you; and O that we were able even to compel you to come in<sup>n</sup>. The nature of Christian charity obligeth us to desire that you might partake of that felicity that is offered you. We know that you may live everlastingly in glory, if you prefer not the world and your flesh before it. Through the great mercy of God, we have tasted somewhat of this felicity ourselves, and cannot choose but wish that you might be companions of our joy. Methinks I should be of so much credit with you myself, as that you should take my word in a matter that I have tried. Why, if you will take my word, sirs, I do profess to you before the Searcher of hearts, that the safety and peace, and comfort of a converted state, is such, that I would not be without it for all the world. Shall I say, I would not change it for a life of drunkenness, or filthiness, or fleshly pleasure, or for all the gains of a covetous worldling? I am ashamed of the comparison. As bad as we know our own hearts to be, I will confidently say, through the grace of God, if the kingdoms of the world were offered us in exchange, we should scorn them, and tread them under foot. I give you my word

<sup>1</sup> Gen. iv. 7.<sup>m</sup> Rom. xiv. 17.<sup>n</sup> Luke xiv. 23.

and experience, but to persuade you to come near and try. But, alas ! if you will not believe God, how can I expect my words should be believed. O that you would but come and try, and when you have tried the way of holiness, but a quarter as much as you have done the ways of the world and the flesh, then if you like it not, take your course. If you find by experience that the way of sin is safer and better, when you have tried both, then turn back again and spare not ; I would trouble you no more, would you but come and try ; it is all that I now desire of you. But to think hardly of a state that you never tried ; to draw back from a life that you never tried ; this is not equal dealing with God, nor impartial faithful dealing for your souls. I know some that have forborne some outward sins awhile, and stepped into an outward profession, and into the company of the godly, have fallen back again. But if you will but try the inward nature, and spiritual life of a saint ; the love, the trust, the zeal, the joy, the endeavours, and the hopes of a saint, then judge and spare not, as experience shall direct you, and forsake God if you really find that the flesh and the world are better. Remember what I say to you. It will leave you unexcusable, and be the confusion of your faces, when you shall answer this another day, that when your everlasting joy or torment did lie upon it, you would not be persuaded by all that we could say, so much as to leave your sins awhile, and come and make trial of a godly life. O wretches ! you will one day be ready to eat your own hearts, to think that you refused, and wilfully refused, and impenitently and obstinately refused, so fair, so necessary, so good a motion.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### *Use of Exhortation.*

BELoved hearers, I am not come hither to-day of my own head, nor in my own name, nor on my own business ; but in the name of Christ, and on the business of your salvation. I know this great assembly will be all very shortly in another world, and we shall meet ere long in a far greater assembly at the day of Christ's judgment, which will be upon



us for all the seeming delay, before the careless world is aware. That you may be ready for that day, and stand with boldness before the Judge, when the unconverted world stands trembling and amazed, as overwhelmed with the unexpected terrors of the Lord, this is the business that I come hither about to day; no less, no lower business than this. That I have not trifled with you, and filled your ears with witty toys and strange matters, I hope you will easily pardon me, when you have considered your condition, and the business of our office. I hate that preaching that passeth over the one thing necessary, and only tickleth the ears of miserable men, when it should endeavour their relief. If the town were on fire, it were no commendable matter to be fiddling and dancing, when you should quench it. If I saw you but sinking in a broken vessel, and ready to drown, if you had not help, it would seem no part of wisdom to me to make a learned oration to you, when I should be helping you out of present danger. I must tell you, therefore, that I came not hither only to talk to you, that you might go home and say, you had heard a fine or a learned sermon; but I come to help you out of the misery of an unconverted state. I see the gulf of remediless destruction is a little before you, and I come to require you in the name of the Lord to make a stand, and go no further in the way of wickedness: but look about you and consider your way, and presently return. Have you been ignorant, inconsiderate worldlings, and forgotten that God that should have had your hearts, and forgotten the life where you must live for ever? Be awakened then, and look before you; lift up the eye of faith, and see that joy or torment that is even at hand. Have you lived to the flesh, as if you had nothing but it to care for? and thought it more ado than needs to provide for everlastingness? In a word, have your hearts been set more on this life, than on that to come? and on the things below, than on God above? If this be so, flatter not yourselves in vain hopes. Delay not a day longer, but presently return from that condition. Believe the word of God, it will else be thy undoing. "For if you live after the flesh, ye shall die<sup>a</sup>." "For they that are far from thee shall perish; but it is good for me to draw nigh to God<sup>b</sup>." "Where your

<sup>a</sup> Rom. viii. 13.<sup>b</sup> Psal. lxxiii. 27.

treasure is, there will your hearts be also <sup>c</sup>." What say you, sirs, will you return to God from the lusts of the flesh, and the love of this world, and a lazy, careless, ungodly life, or will you not? Will you justify yourselves no longer in a state of death, nor excuse, nor befriend the sins that have endangered you, but yield to the converting work of the Spirit, and strive not against that grace that would recover you? I pray you give me not the bare hearing, but let your hearts make answer, aye or no. Will you return and be converted, or will you not? Dare any of you say, no? I hope you dare not. But it is next to saying no, if your hearts say nothing. Tell me not of your cold wishes and purposes, and you hope you shall. A thousand such faint and heartless meanings have left souls to perish in endless misery. It is resolution, strong resolution, and present resolution that you must have, and that God expects. What say you? Are you resolved to return, or are you not? Take heed what you say, for God is here present and seeth your hearts. Do not halt between two opinions; but if Baal be God follow him; if the flesh and the world be God, and will make you happy, follow them; but if the Lord be God, follow him <sup>d</sup>. Do not put me off with to-morrow, or sometime hereafter, as if it were not yet time, or you could not spare your sin, as yet. No resolution is sincere, but present resolution: he that would keep his sins a day longer, would keep them a year, and seven years, and for ever if he might. He that would not close with Christ to-day, would never do it by his good will. No man loveth God, that longeth not presently to be such as God would have him be. Again, therefore, I ask you, are you resolved presently to return, or not? This is the business I come hither upon, and I do not mean to go away thus, till I have my errand, unless you say me shameful nay; I am resolved to leave you better or worse, either converted, or more inexcusable than you were before, and to say that which shall be a witness against you, if it convert you not. And here, first, if you be not yet resolved, I shall desire that you will soberly answer me these few questions following:

*Quest. 1.* What do you think had come of you, if God had cut you off by death all this while before you were con-

<sup>c</sup> Matt. vi. 21.

<sup>d</sup> 1 Kings xviii. 21.

verted? Where do you think you should have been this very hour, if death had found you in an unconverted state? Do you not know? Why, doth not my text tell you? Will not you believe Jesus Christ? I know, if you do not, you had been as sure in hell, as you are now on earth. Oh! sirs, how many a fair advantage hath God had against you! He could have killed you with one frown; with a bit of bread, with a draught of drink, by the turning of a hand, by the slipping of a foot, by the stumbling of a horse; besides many hundred diseases that would have opened the door, or rather have broken down your dusty cottages, and let out your guilty, unprepared souls into another world. Oh! you cannot now apprehend what a dreadful thing it is for an unchanged soul to appear before the Holy God! Doth it not sometimes amaze the best to think what a change it is that death makes? And what it is for a man that hath lived among mortals on earth, to find himself in a moment among angels and other spirits? How much more should the thoughts of a more lamentable change amaze the unconverted? It is only, or chiefly some doubts, and some strangeness to that heavenly place, that amazeth the godly; which will all be dispelled at the twink of an eye, by that joy and glory that they shall find themselves possessed of. But it is another kind of matter, even the everlasting misery that should amaze the wicked. O, dear friends, what a case had you been in, if you had died before conversion? Your hearts are not able to conceive of the thousandth part of the misery that you would have been in. And have you lived all this while in so much danger, and will you live in it still? God forbid. Hath a wonder of mercy kept you out of hell so long, and will you loiter yet longer in the old condition? Methinks I look upon you as imitating Lot, when he was called out of Sodom<sup>e</sup>; that after he had been warned by the angel to get away out of Sodom with all that he had, as he loved his life; yet sons and daughters, or one thing or other so long detain him, that he lingereth away the time, till God being merciful unto him, the angels did even carry him forth<sup>f</sup>, and said, "Escape now for thy life, look not behind thee, and make no stay<sup>g</sup>." So God hath mercifully called you out of the Sodom of your sins, and you have lingered

<sup>e</sup> Gen. xix.<sup>f</sup> Ver. 16.<sup>g</sup> Ver. 17.



till now. Oh! that the Lord would be so merciful to you as to lay hands as it were upon those hearts, and take them off the world and your lusts, and bring you away! This warning however I am bound to give you: 'Escape now for your lives, look not behind you, stay not any longer, lest you perish in your negligence.' So much for my first question, 'What had become of you, if you had died before conversion?'

*Quest. 2.* My next question is this; Are you sure if you delay returning another day, that you shall be that day out of hell? If you refuse this offer that God maketh you now, are you sure you shall ever have another? Can you say, that your bodies shall not lie in the churchyard, and your souls past hope and help in misery, before the next meeting in this place, if you so long delay and harden your hearts? You are not sure of it; if you are, let us see your evidence of security. Hath God any where promised you another day's time? Why, can you live a day whether God will or not? You know you cannot; I dare say you know it. You know that many an one as strong as you, and that feared death as little, hath been quickly gone; and go you must, however, at the last. Well, brethren, do I need to ask you such a question now, whether it be wisdom, or madness rather, for any man wilfully or negligently to live one day or night longer in such a condition, as if you should die in it, you were undone for ever? Will you venture to live another day in such a case in which you cannot be sure that one day to be out of hell? O, methinks, while you are unconverted, this saying of Christ should be still ringing in your ears; "Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." And methinks every night when you lie down in bed, you should think with yourselves, 'What if I should die in an unconverted state before the next morning?' Methinks the very dreams of this should awake you with terror. Methinks when you rise in the morning, you should think with yourselves, 'What if I should die in an unconverted state before night?' Methinks the daily thoughts of this should mar your mirth, and sour to you all the sweetness of the world. How can you forbear in such a danger to think of it, in your shops, and at your plough; at home and

abroad, which way soever you go, or whatsoever you are doing? If you say, 'Though I am not sure to live a day, yet I am likely, for I have many an one already, when I had no assurance of it. I answer, but who would leave such a matter as his everlasting salvation upon such hazard? I warn thee therefore from God, in the words of God, "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for who knoweth what a day may bring forth<sup>b</sup>?"

*Quest. 3.* My third question to you is this; Which dost thou really think is better, God or the creature, heaven or earth, a life in glory, or the present pleasure of sin? Is it indeed thy settled judgment, that it is better be drunk than sober, and better take the delight of thy flesh, and follow this world, than live to God here, and with God hereafter? Is this thy settled judgment, or is it not? If it be, thou art an infidel, or an atheist, and not a Christian. Nay worse than most infidels or heathens in the world. If it be not thy judgment, how darest thou do it? Wilt thou go against thy own knowledge? Wilt thou not do that which thou knowest is both pleasing to God, and best for thyself? Shall God shew thee thy misery, and wilt thou wilfully run into it? And shall he shew thee thy happiness, and wilt thou wilfully forsake it? Dost thou think that it is better to be converted, or not? If thou think it to be a better state, how darest thou neglect it, or refuse it as thou dost? Who can help thee, if thou know that thou dost evil, and yet wilt do it? If thou know that thy way is the way of death, and yet wilt go on in it? And who shall pity thee, if knowingly thou wilt damn thyself?

*Quest. 4.* My fourth question to thee is this; Dost thou believe that man is made for this world only, or for a better? If heaven were never so desirable, if it be not attainable, it is in vain to seek it: but if it may be had, what hearts have they that will neglect it, or prefer any other thing before it? Do you think that man was only made to take a life of pleasure on this earth, and go no further, and there is an end of him? If you think so, you are blinder than most heathens in the world. Three sorts of creatures did God create; one sort are pure spirits without flesh; and these were placed in their happiness at the first to be nearest to God, and em-

<sup>b</sup> Prov. xxvii. 1.

ployed by him in his noblest works ; only being not at first confirmed, some of them fell away, and are become devils : another sort of creatures have flesh without immortal souls, having no other life than what is fitted to their earthly state ; I mean beasts and birds and all other unreasonable creatures : these are not capable of any higher felicity than they here enjoy : they were never intended for it, and therefore their natures are not fitted to it. But man is of a middle sort, partaking somewhat of both these ; he hath flesh like the beasts, because he must live on earth as they, and so must eat, and drink, and sleep, and die, and his flesh must perish as well as theirs : but with this flesh he hath a soul that is akin to angels, and therefore is capable of an endless life, and fitted for it : so that so far as he is fleshly, so far he is earthly, and is like the beasts that perish ; but as he is a living soul, he is disposed to an endless life, and may there be like to the angels of God, Luke xx. 36. You may see this difference between brutes and men, in their very natures here. They know not that there is another life, and we do : they live not in hopes and fears of another life, but we do. Experience certainly discovers this, they fear but one death, and we fear two, in fearing a misery after death. We govern them only by present objects ; but God ruleth us by promises and threatenings of unseen things, and by the hopes and fears of another life : it is our nature to be thus governed, and theirs to be ruled by sensual objects.

Well then, if man was made for higher things, should he not seek them, and live for them ? Remember then, I beseech you, that the work of conversion is but to set your hearts on the things that you were made for : it is to make you know that you are men and not beasts, and to bring you to live the life of men. Sin doth unman us, and in a sort even brutify us ; and conversion restoreth us, in our present measure to the ends that we were created for, and to the image of God that we were created in, which disposeth us to those ends : if you believe then that man is not a beast, but made for an everlasting life with God, away with fleshly, worldly vanities, and live as strangers here, and as those that are heirs of that everlasting life.

*Quest. 5.* My next question to you is ; Have you ever soberly and considerately compared the gain and the loss



that conversion will bring you? Did you ever on the one side consider of all the present peace and safety, and that everlasting glory, which is the portion of them that cleave to God, and of the misery of all others, as I have before discovered it to you? And on the other side, have you considered how small a matter it is that you can lose, if you yield to that grace that would prepare you for this glory? Sure if you had ever considered both of the winning and the losing, and laid one in the one end of the scales, and the other in the other, the case might have been resolved with you long before now. Sinners, when God and his ministers make such a stir with you to persuade you to be converted, and all will not serve, but year after year you are still the same, there is somewhat sure that is the cause. If somewhat did not stick with you, you would have yielded before this time. Somewhat there is sure that you are afraid of losing by the change, or else what should be the matter that you refuse, or delay? Well, let us hear what it is that you are afraid it will deprive you of. Is it any thing that is better than God, than heaven, than the saving of your souls? This is the benefit that conversion bringeth, and if it would take from you any thing that is better, refuse it then, and spare not. I tell you, sinners, God hath no need of you; it is for your own good, and that honour and pleasure that he takes in doing good, that he is so earnest with you to come in. And if any of you dare charge the God of heaven with dissembling, as if he meant your hurt, while he thus pretendeth your good, and would take from you more than he offereth you, or would give you; make good thy charge if thou canst, or rather take heed, if thou love thyself, of such blasphemous imaginations. O poor soul, if God would do thee harm, who dost thou think will do thee good? If the chief good be not good, where wilt thou find good? Dost thou fear lest the sun should deprive thee of thy light, when thou canst have none but what it affordeth thee? Dost thou run away from the fire, lest it should make thee cold? What, fear lest God should do thee harm, when there is no good but what doth stream from him? Who wilt thou go to for any good, if thou flee from him? Hath any creature the least relief for thee, except they receive it from God, and he send it thee by their hands? They have nothing but what

he lendeth them, nor can they give thee any succour, but by his consent. What is it then that thou art afraid of losing, by being converted? Is it any thing that is worth the keeping? It is incredible that God should envy thee thy happiness; that is the work of the devil, which moved him to tempt us from it. And dare you make God like him, or father on God his nature, or his works? It is incredible wrong that men do to God while they question his goodness, and dislike his holy laws and ways, and quarrel with him, as if he were their enemy: and when he would draw them out of the prison of the devil, and the power of sin, they draw back, as if he would draw them into bondage. O base, unthankful wretches! must salvation be so dearly bought, and so kindly offered you, and do you thus reject it? Oh! foolish self-destroying wretches, are you so far delivered from all your enemies, that your happiness is brought to your own choice, and you may freely have it if you will, and now will you not have it? And will you be the last and deadly enemy to yourselves? Why, what is it that you are so loath to leave? Is it your sins? Is it your fleshly pleasures? Or your worldly profits, or your ease, or credit, or which of these? Is it not a sad case that reasonable men should come to such a pass, that they are afraid of returning to the favour of God, and of coming from the thralldom of the devil, into his service, lest they should lose their pleasure? As if there were less delight in the love of God, than in fleshpleasing filthiness; or as if the joys of heaven were less than the mirth of an alehouse. Is it not a sad case that ever men should be afraid of being losers by God? or of missing their money, or their houses, or lands, when they come to heaven? As if there were any want there where all are glorious kings: and as if Lazarus had not changed his state. And is it not a shameful thing, that men should be ashamed to be the servants of the God of heaven, and think it a discredit to be the heirs of glory? Is it to any purpose to talk to such men as these? Will they ever hear reason that are so unreasonable? If preaching were not the ordinance of God, which he hath commanded us to use, and therefore may set it in with his blessing, when he pleaseth, we should even throw by all, and look on such as these as madmen, and think, till God shall bring them to their wits, there

is no good to be done by speaking to them. If a man will fly from God, to an alehouse, or gaming-house for pleasure, or from God to the world for profit or honour, what shall we say to such a man, but even take him in this as besides himself? For who will think better of him that will run into a prison, or to his enemies, for his liberty? or that will tumble in the chanel, or lie down in the sink, and will not come out for fear of being befouled? I would ask the drunkard, or fornicator, or worldling, or whosoever he be that hath the most that sin can do for him; dost thou think that thou hast a more comfortable life than those that are furthest from thy sin? Dost thou think that they that abhor thy drunkenness, whoredom, or worldly courses of life, have not a more comfortable life than thou? Besides that which they shall have in heaven, when sin hath brought thee into torment (if true conversion do not prevent it), even in this life, which, think you, have the more peaceable and comfortable life? I am even ashamed to make the comparison. A wise and godly man doth abhor these things that are the felicity of ungodly men. Your filthy lives, which you are loath to leave, would make the heart of a sober man to rise to think of them. What wise man would not think it a misery, if he were condemned to live your lives but a few days. A swine takes pleasure to tumble in the mire, but a man in his wits will take no pleasure to bear him company. And is this all that you are like to lose by it, if you be converted, and yet will you stand off? Well, I say no more of it now but this: If, after all this, you take the world to be better than God, and the pleasures of sin to be greater than the pleasures of a holy life, and the joy that God would give you with himself. And if you are afraid of turning to God lest you be losers by him, you may take your course, and stay till the end shall make you wiser to your cost.

*Quest. 6.* My next question to you, is this: Have you now any reason to give against your speedy effectual conversion, which you will undertake to stand to, and justify at the bar of God? Do you know any harm by that state and life that God by converting grace would bring you to? You have heard much that may be said for it; what now have you to say against it? I know that a great many of senseless words are poured out by foolish sinners against



the holy ways of God. But they are such as shew their folly and malice, and proceed from wilfulness and not from reason. Not one of all these that you hear in a corner scorning at godliness, or reasoning against it, dare stand to these reasons when God shall deal with him. For my part, sirs, I would persuade you to nothing unreasonable and unfit. I have told you my reasons for the necessity of conversion: if you are against it now, either you have reason to be against it, or you have not; if you have no reason for it, how dare you, how can you do it? What! will you renounce your reason in the greatest matters, where you have the greatest use for it? or, will you be wilfully brutes? Or will you set yourselves knowingly against God and your own souls? In the name of God consider first what you do. It must be either deluded reason or mere wilfulness that cause you now to refuse or delay to be converted. I beseech you let me have the answer of your hearts here before the Lord. Deal truly, have you any reason why you should not be converted and turn to God before to-morrow? I pray you do not pass it over carelessly, but give me your answer: Have you any reason for it, or have you not? If you have not, your conscience is then witness that you are wilful in your neglect. You turn not to God because you will not turn. You go on in sin, because you will go on. You do then in your hearts, as it were, set God at defiance, and say, 'I confess I have no reason to sin, but yet I will do it: I have no reason to delay my return to God an hour, but yet I will do it. And I will do it, though reason as well as the word of God cry out against it.' Who can you blame then, if the plagues of God shall reach such a rebel, and if he deal with you as wilful sinners should be dealt with? If you had done it ignorantly, you had some excuse, or you might have been beaten with the fewer stripes: but wilful sin hath no excuse, and as such the Lord will pour out his wrath. If your own reason tell you, you should presently return to God, and you will not, how can you expect in reason to find mercy with the Lord? O that you knew what a heinous thing it is to sin wilfully after the knowledge of the truth: it would make every joint of you to tremble, lest if you go a little further, there should be no more sacrifice for sin, "but a certain looking for of judgment, and fire which de-

vouresth the adversary <sup>1</sup>." Well, sirs, let me again put the question to you: What say you? Will you presently return to God, or will you not? Halt not between both, but resolve off, or on. Say plainly, you will, or you will not: if you will not, tell me then, why will you not? Have you any reason for it, or have you none? If none, how dare you be wilful? but if you have any reason, I pray you answer my next question. Is your reason such as you will undertake to stand to at the bar of God? It is an easy matter to deceive yourselves and others, and to daub over a cause that is apparently naught, and to bring fair pretences for the most foul actions. Something men will have to say, to stop the mouth of those that would convince them, be their course never so ungodly: but the question is, whether you have any reasons for your sin, and against your speedy and effectual return, which you will undertake to stand to before the Lord. I pray you bethink yourselves soberly of an answer, before you hold on your course any longer; lest you be at the bar before you are aware. One man's reason is, his sin is sweet, and he hopes he may safely keep it a little longer, and then he means to let it go. It seemeth, then, you had rather sin than not; and that shews that at present thou art a graceless wretch. But is the sweetness of thy sin a sufficient reason for thee to refuse the sweetness of a pardon, and the sweetness of the reconciled face of God, and the sweetness of everlasting glory? Dare you stand to such a reason as this is before God? I know you dare not. How then dare you delay your conversion upon such reasons? Is sin sweet to thee, and is not holiness sweeter? is not pardon, and life, and grace, and Christ, and God, and glory sweeter? O what kind of reasons be these for a reasonable man to venture his salvation upon? I shall not stand to try the rest of them, because they will fall under a more particular consideration hereafter. Only in general I charge and require you, plead not such reasons as you dare not stand to at the bar of God.

*Quest. 7.* My next question to you, is this; Have you ever well considered who they be that are for your conversion, and who they be that are against it? You may easily conjecture by this, whether it be good or bad. You

<sup>1</sup> Heb. x. 26.

have heard already who they be that are for it: God is for it, Christ is for it, the Holy Ghost is for it, the angels of heaven are for it, the ministers of the Gospel are for it, and every wise and godly man is for it. God is so much for it, that he sent his Son to purchase it, and his word to command and call you to it, and to give you directions how it must be done, and his ministers to persuade you to hear and submit. He is so much for it, that he hath sworn that he hath “no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he return and live;” and pleadeth the case with you, and asketh you, “Why you will die<sup>k</sup>.” Christ is so much for it, that he hath made it his office; he took the nature of man on him to that end, that he might seek and save that which was lost; and for that end he submitted to the cursed death of the cross, and for that end hath he made the promises of his Gospel, and sent abroad his ministers to proclaim them. He is so much for it, that he is purposely become the “Captain of our salvation;” and having first given us his own example, doth lead us on in all encounters, and calleth us to follow him, that we may conquer as he hath done. He is so much for it, that upon this very ground will he condemn at last the impenitent world, because they would not be converted by him. The Holy Ghost is so much for it, that he moveth and importuneth sinners thereunto, and effectually worketh it in all the elect. The angels of heaven, as you have heard, are so much for it, that it is their joy when a sinner is converted. The ministers of Christ are so much for it, that they make it their business and study, and preach and pray, and suffer, and think nothing too much if they might but accomplish it. “They are willing to spend and be spent for this end<sup>l</sup>.” “They account not their lives dear to them, so they may but finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they have received of the Lord in preaching the Gospel of the grace of God<sup>m</sup>.” They are content to “instruct those in meekness that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, that they may escape out of the snares of satan<sup>n</sup>.” All the godly are so much for it, that it is their daily prayer and earnest desire: and they would do any thing they could to accomplish it. O how heartily do they pray for your conversion, that the kingdom of God may

<sup>k</sup> Ezek. xxxiii. 11.<sup>l</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 15.<sup>m</sup> Acts xx. 24.<sup>n</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 25.



come into your hearts! How glad are they when they hear of the conversion of a sinner! Well, sinners, methinks you should consider with yourselves, 'For what reason do all these desire my conversion? Who is it that shall be the gainer by it? What doth God get by it? What doth Christ the Redeemer get by it? What doth the Spirit that moveth me get by it? What profit is it to the ministers of the Gospel? Might they not as easily let me alone, and please me in my sins, and tell me of no danger? What profit is it to all my godly friends, that they should so earnestly desire it, and pray for it? Is it not I that am like to have the gain? And should I set against all the friends I have that endeavour my own good, even my everlasting good?

You see who they be that are for your conversion: will you now consider who they be that are against it? Are they better than God? Are they truer friends to you than Christ and his ministers, and those that persuade you to repent and live? Are they such as love you better than all these do? Why, who are they? First, the chiefest enemy to your conversion is the devil himself. It is he that dissuadeth you; that raiseth doubts and temptations in your mind, and casteth so many rubs in your way. He would not have you converted if he could hinder it. If all his subtlety can hinder it; if all his power and malice can hinder it; if all the instruments that he can raise up against it, can hinder it, you shall never be converted. He knows he shall lose a servant and subject of his kingdom; he shall be cast out of that possession which he hath kept in peace. If he do not rule you, he shall not torment you, which is pleasant to his malice. No one in all the world is so much against your conversion as the devil. When you say, you will never be so pure, nor so godly, nor live so holy and heavenly a life, O how you please him! You could not have said a word that he more delighteth to hear; for it is as if you had said, 'I will never leave my master, the devil, to serve Christ.' Nay, it is all one as if you said, 'I am resolved, I will never be saved, seeing there is no salvation without conversion.' When you say you will do as your forefathers have done; and you will take your pleasure and follow the world; and not be so precise, nor trouble your minds so much about the case of your souls, or the matters

of eternal life ; O how you please the devil by this ! This is that he would have. You speak even as he would have you speak ; for indeed it is he that tempteth you to speak it. But for God's sake, and your soul's sake, sinners, will you consider whether God or the devil is your better friend ? You are the cause that I am put upon such a strange question to you : whether that be liker to be for your good, which God would have, and Christ would have, and the holy Ghost would have, and ministers would have, and all godly people would have ; or that which the devil himself would have ? Do I need to bid you consider of this ? A little consideration sure may resolve it. Can you think that all these forementioned are against you, and satan for you ? That all these are your enemies, and satan is for your friend ? If you will indeed take God, and Christ, and his Spirit, and people, and all for your enemies, and him that is your greatest enemy, for your friend, and that after such warnings, as you have had ; you may reap those fruits of his friendship which you little think of.

But there are some other besides the devil against your conversion. True ; but who be they ? None, but his agents, and those that are deceived by him themselves. Perhaps you will hardly think so ; for one may be your father, another your mother, another your husband or wife, or those that profess themselves your friends, and some perhaps may be thought wise and learned in the world. But what doth God say of them, who is most to be believed ? He telleth you, they are foolish, and wicked, and enemies to the cross of Christ. You call them friends, but God tells you they are your enemies. If you think I speak too hardly of them, in telling you they are ignorant, blinded sinners, believe God that saith the same. I hope you will not accuse him of wronging them, or any one. Never man spake against conversion that knew what he said, and was converted himself. It is only those that never knew or tried the ways of God, that persuade you from them. Will you go to the blind for direction ? or to the slaves of satan for counsel whether you should return to God ? If they were wise men they would return themselves ; and if they be not wise they are unfit to give you counsel. And methinks your own reason might tell you, that that man cannot be wise that would draw the

hearts of others from God, and would have them venture upon the drawn sword of his vengeance; and do that which he hath threatened everlasting destruction to. Can that be a wise man that doth himself prefer this dunghill world, and the swinish mirth of a sinner before all the holy joy and glory of the saints, even before the present life of grace, and the future life of glory? Ask your reason whether this can be a wise man? I may boldly say, then, that there is none but the devil and wicked fools that are against your conversion. Tell them how I call them, and spare not; for God calls them more, and their own consciences will call them so for ever, if they do not do that themselves which they would dissuade you from doing. I say it again, there is not one in the world, but the devil and wicked fools that are against your conversion. And if these shall be your counsellors, and ye will be ruled more by them than God, and all the truest friends you have in the world, let your own consciences judge whether you have dealt well with God, or with yourselves?

*Quest. 8.* Yet I have some more questions to ask you, and my next is this; Had you rather die in a converted, or unconverted state? And in which of these had you rather appear before the Lord? I pray you put this question to your own hearts, and soberly answer it. I say, which of these two conditions had you rather be in at death and judgment? Had you rather die the death of the righteous, or of the wicked? And had you rather stand among the unconverted, or the converted, at the bar of God? Had you rather that death should find you with clean hands, an innocent life, and an heavenly mind, delighting in God, and hoping for Christ's appearing; or that it should find you either in your ignorance, or worldliness, or fornication, or drunkenness, or with the guilt of any of these upon your souls, and with an heart that is not unfeignedly turned from them unto God? I do not think there is the most blockish or stout-hearted sinners among you; no, not they that make a mock at godliness, and discourage others from it, but they had rather be among the godly, than the ungodly, at the last. And is it not a strange thing, that men should set against that course, which they would wish to be found in? and should live contrary to it, when yet at the same time they



had rather die in it, than as they are? Sinners, should you not be now such as you would be found then? And should you not live in that state as you would die in? Will it be best then, and is it worst now? how can that be? Believe it, sirs, you have neither your lives, nor the grace of God at your will. If you would be found among the converted at the last, become such quickly, lest the last should come before you are aware. If life forsake you not, you cannot tell whether the Spirit of God may forsake you. If grace must be had, or else you are undone, take it while you may have it, lest you be given over to the hardness of your hearts.

*Quest.* 9. My next question is this; If God should send an angel from heaven to you, to plead against your sinful course, and to persuade you to be converted, would you hearken to him and obey him; or would you not? If he should appear to you in your careless and worldly course of life, or if he should come to you in the very act of your sin, and tell you how the Lord abhorreth your iniquity, and how his vengeance hangs over your head, and will fall upon you, if you speedily repent not; and should persuade and entreat you to lament your folly, and turn to God with all your heart, without delay, what would you do? and what answer would you give? Would you tell him to his face, 'I will not be converted; I will take my pleasure, and follow the world, and venture my soul rather than live so strict a life? Would you say thus to him? You would not, sure you durst not do it! Would you not tell him, 'I am sorry for my sins, and resolve to turn without delay;' but if you should so tell him, if you did not do it, your promise would but prove you hypocrites, and rise up against you to your condemnation. O, you do not know how such a sight would amaze you, and awaken you from security. An hand that appeared writing upon a wall, did make the knees of a sensual king to tremble; it loosed his very loins, it changed his countenance, it troubled his thoughts, Dan. v. 6. The appearance of an angel, at the resurrection of Christ, did make the keepers of the grave to shake, and become as dead men, Matt. xxviii. 4. How an angel's appearance affected Cornelius; and an earthquake with the effects did move the jailor, may be seen in Acts x. and xvi. and many the like examples we might give you. What if an angel of God

should but come and speak over this text to you, that I am preaching: "Verily, except you be converted, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," would you yield, or would you not? If you would not, you are hardened with a witness. If you would, let me follow my question a little further with you. Should not the written word of Christ himself, and the voice of his messengers that speak in his name, and all the judgments and mercies that second these; I say, should not all these prevail with you as much, and more than an angel's voice? You have here the protestation, or vehement asseveration of the Lord himself, and should not that be of greatest authority with us? Angels are but servants of Christ and ministering spirits for the good of his elect: would you hear them, and will you not hear their master? Would you hear an unusual messenger, and will you not learn in Christ's appointed way? If it be a doctrine to be received from angels, tell me, if you can, why it should not be received now from the word of God, and from his ministers?

*Quest. 10.* The last question that I shall now trouble you with, is this; Do you think that man who after all this shall refuse to turn to God, and after all this shall remain unconverted, will have any just excuse before the Lord? Or will he not be left speechless, and under the condemnation of his own conscience for ever? Is it any pity to cast away that man, that will without all pity cast away himself, and no saying will serve him, and no reason will satisfy him? Or when he is convinced and silenced, yet for all that will not be converted? When it is their own doing, and they were their own undoing; and when God did not spare for cost and persuasion to have done them good; and when he shall say after all, as in Isa. v. 4. "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" What should I have said more to this sinner, than I have said? What plea is left for such a sinner? Or what can he say why he should not be sentenced to perdition? Will you say you did it ignorantly, or you had no warning? You cannot say it. Indians may say it, and many barbarous nations of the world may say it; but England cannot say it, nor you that hear me cannot say it. You have warning after warning, and all said to you that we knew how to say, that was

likely to move the heart of a sinner. Will you say that you were not able, because it was a work above your power? Why, you cannot thus excuse your sin: for if you had been but truly willing, you might have done it? Your disability lay in your obstinate unwillingness. Are you willing this day, unfeignedly willing, to turn to God, or are you not? If you be, you will return without delay. For if you are willing, who can hinder you? But if you be not truly willing, how can you say, that you would have done it if you could? Or how can you excuse yourselves by your disability? Unwillingness is a disability which excuseth no men, but aggravateth their sin. If you could have said that you would have returned with all your hearts, but were not able for all that you were willing, then you had some excuse; but now you have nothing to say for yourselves.

*Object.* We know there is no pleading for ourselves, nor any excuse to be made with God, but yet we hope we may be saved for all that?

*Ans.* How can you have any hope, if you have no ground of hope to shew? If you have no reason to give against the sentence of your condemnation, how can you think to escape it? God is just, and will judge in righteousness according to his word; and they that have not now a title in the word for their justification at judgment, shall never be there justified, whatsoever they may dream.

Beloved hearers, I have been all this while pleading with you by the reasons of the word of God, to see if it were possible for me to persuade you to yield to the light, and be converted, that you may live. I have meant you no harm, unless salvation be your harm. The threatening of the Scripture, and the miserable state of unconverted souls were all this while before me, which moved me to use so many persuasions with you. Have I prevailed with you, or have I not? Are you resolved for conversion, fully resolved, or are you not? God hath all this while stood by and heard what I have said to you, and seeth now what answer is in your hearts, and what effect these words have had. Shall all this be lost? And when we have said all that we can, must we sit down in sorrow, and say, who hath believed our reports? Is there one man or woman of you that dare go on in an unconverted state, and draw back from God, and loiter out your



time, and still return to your former sins after all that I have said? If you do so, do it at your peril; and when you find yourselves in hell, remember the sermons that have been preached to you on this text, and blame not me, but your wilful negligence. Think not much that I bid you remember these sermons when you find yourselves in hell, for you shall do it then, whether you will or not. There is not a soul of you that shall live or die in an unconverted state, but shall remember the warnings that I have now and formerly given you. Sermons will be remembered in hell, that are forgotten on earth; and they that were weary to hear them here, and would not be at the small labour to repeat them, or hear them repeated, or else ponder in secret of what they heard, shall there think of it, and think again to their sorrow. As Abraham said to the condemned worldling, “Remember that thou in thy life receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus his evil things; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented.” So shall you remember the time, and means, and warnings that you once had. If you ask me how I know that? Why because the word of God doth tell me, that the consciences of wicked men will be their accusers<sup>P</sup>. And that they shall mourn at the last, and say, “How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof, and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me<sup>Q</sup>?” And many other Scriptures assure me of the same. O how much better were it now to believe the Lord, and foresee this evil, and think of your way while you have opportunity to escape? How much safer were this for you! And how much more pleasing would it be to God and us? O do not cast away your souls, and displease God, and all the true friends you have, only to please the devil and your flesh! Let me urge you a little further in the words of your Maker, and I charge you to regard them, as you will answer the contempt of them at your peril. Did you never observe how God doth pity the stir that poor sinners make in the world for nothing, and the unprofitable trade of sinning that they drive on, and how he inviteth them to himself, as the true gain and felicity? “Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto

<sup>P</sup> Luke xvi. 25.<sup>P</sup> Rom. ii. 15.<sup>Q</sup> Prov. v. 11—13.

me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear and your soul shall live<sup>r</sup>.” “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes: cease to do evil; learn to do well. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow<sup>s</sup>.” “How long ye simple ones will ye love simplicity? And ye scorers delight in scorning? And fools hate knowledge? Turn ye at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you. I will make known my words unto you<sup>t</sup>.” “Turn ye even to me with all your hearts; with fasting, and weeping, and mourning: rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful to them that turn, but not to them that go on in their iniquity<sup>u</sup>.” “When a wicked man turneth away from his wickedness, which he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin. For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; wherefore turn yourselves and live ye<sup>x</sup>.” The like I recited to you from Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

These are the calls of the God of mercy, inviting you into the way wherein his saving mercy is only to be found. O how glad would many thousands be that are now past hope, if they had but the call of God to repent, as you have this day! How glad should you be that you have such an offer, and that it is not yet too late? And therefore how cheerfully should you yield to be converted? I shall in conclusion say but this; If ever a man or woman of you all shall appear before the Lord in judgment, in a carnal, unconverted state, after all the warnings you have received, I hope God will not charge it upon me, who faithfully, though weakly, endeavoured to prevent it.

<sup>r</sup> Isa. lv. 1—3.

<sup>u</sup> Josh. ii. 12.

<sup>s</sup> Isa. i. 16.

<sup>x</sup> Ezek. xviii. 23. 30—32.

<sup>t</sup> Prov. i. 22, 23.

## CHAPTER VII.

By this time I hope many of you are willing to be converted, and are ready to inquire what you should do to that end? and whether there be any thing on your parts to be done that may further it? And in hope that you are willing, I shall next proceed to give you my best advice herein. And if it were so that you could do nothing to further it, because I am sure you may do much to hinder it; and have done all this while, or else it had been better with you than it is; therefore I shall shew you what are the common hindrances of conversion, which you must carefully endeavour to remove or conquer; and with them I shall adjoin the contrary directions, which concern your necessary duty to this end. And though some of their contraries are real parts of conversion, yet the reason that I mention them here is, because the not yielding to the initial acts in the understanding, is the hindrance of the completive acts on the heart and life.

*Hindrance* 1. The first hindrance of conversion that I shall warn you of, is, The wilful neglect of those ordinary means which God hath appointed for the work of conversion. When God will give any man saving grace, ordinarily he will do it by the means of grace. He that hath appointed his ordinances to that end, will so far stand to his own appointment, and honour his own ordinances, as to work by them, and not ordinarily without them. If men therefore will not use God's means, no wonder if they go without his grace. For, 1. Such are out of the way of grace, and when they avoid the causes, they cannot in reason look for the effects. 2. And moreover, they do provoke God to withhold and deny his grace when they set so light by it, as that they will not so much as use the means to get it. A man by the help of common grace may see the absence and the necessity of special grace, and may do something in the use of means to obtain it if he will; and when men will not so far use their common grace, it is just with God to deny them special grace. For example:

(1.) One particular means of conversion, is, The hearing of the word preached by the ministers of Christ in the pub-



lic assembly. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God <sup>a</sup>." God sent Paul "to open men's eyes and convert them <sup>b</sup>." God would so far favour Cornelius, as to send an angel to him, but not to preach the Gospel, but only to bid him send for a preacher, because he would keep to his standing ordinance, and make use of his ministers and appointed means. So he would stop Paul by a vision in his way, and do more for him in acquainting him extraordinarily with his name, than he doth with others; and yet he sendeth him to Ananias for instruction <sup>c</sup>. It was by hearing Peter preach that the Jews were pricked at the heart, and converted, and three thousand were added to the church at once <sup>d</sup>. It was God that must open the heart of Lydia; but what did he open it for, but to attend the things that were spoken by Paul, that thereby she might be converted <sup>e</sup>? God would vouchsafe an earthquake to prepare the heart of the jailor for conversion, but he would not convert him without the preaching of Paul and Silas <sup>f</sup>. It was those that had ears and heard not, and hearts that were hardened against the word, that were not converted, healed or forgiven <sup>g</sup>. By teaching sinners the way to God, David assured himself, they shall be converted to him <sup>h</sup>. The word of God is the seed of life, which is sown and takes root in the hearts of them that God will save <sup>i</sup>. It is the word of God which "abideth for ever," which is "the incorruptible seed by which we are born again <sup>k</sup>." God hath made those promises of a blessing on his word, which should draw us to attend it: "Incline your ears, come unto me, hear and your souls shall live <sup>l</sup>." And he hath threatened those that will not hear and obey, severely, Matt. x. 14. If a people will not hear the ministers of Christ, they must "shake off the dust of their feet in witness against them." And Christ hath attested that it "shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that people." It is by his ministers that Christ doth teach his church, and every

<sup>a</sup> Rom x. 14. 17.<sup>b</sup> Acts xxvi. 17, 18. x. 3. 5.<sup>c</sup> Acts ix. 6. 10.<sup>d</sup> Acts ii. 37. 41.<sup>e</sup> Acts xvi. 14.<sup>f</sup> Acts xvi. 32.<sup>g</sup> Mark iv. 12. John xii. 40. Acts xxviii. 27.<sup>h</sup> Psal. li. 13.<sup>i</sup> Matt. xiii. 8. 19. 23. Luke viii. 11.<sup>k</sup> 1 Pet. i. 23. 25.<sup>l</sup> Prov. i. 23. Isa. lv. 3.

soul that heareth not him, shall be cut off from his people <sup>m</sup>. If you will be at home when the message of God is delivered to the congregation, you cannot expect the blessing and benefit of it. If you can find something else to do when you should hear the word of God, God will find something else to do when he should give you his saving grace.

*Object.* 'But the minister is but a weak man, and I cannot profit by him.'

*Answ.* Doth he not deliver the profitable word of God? Doth he not preach the doctrine of faith, and repentance, and justification by Christ, and shew you the way of life? If you can hear the doctrine of everlasting life, and not profit by it, because the minister is not so able as others, blame your own hearts, and give more attendance and regard to what you hear; and lament that ignorance or carelessness of your own that hindereth you from profiting.

*Object.* 'But I have more temptations in the congregation, than I have when I sit at home. Satan is troubling me with vain thoughts, and I cannot attend.'

*Answ.* Is that a reason against duty, and so necessary a duty? Will you think to overcome the devil's temptations by yielding to them? That is it that he would have. If he could drive you from God's ordinances, he hath his will. Will you make your own sin a pretence against your necessary duty? That is to make one sin a pretence for another; yea, a lesser sin a pretence for a greater: it is your sin to hear with a careless, wandering mind, but it is a greater sin not to hear at all.

*Object.* 'I can profit as much by staying at home, and reading the Scripture, or some good book: it is the word of God which they preach, and it is that which I read at home. The books that are written by learned men, are better than the sermons that are preached by our ministers.'

*Answ.* 1. What foolish pretences are these against the plain command of God, and our own necessary duty? When God hath appointed you your duty, will he allow you to forsake it upon your own reason, as if you were wiser than God, and knew what will profit you better than he? If your physician give you a medicine, and bid you take it for the cure of your disease, will you be wiser than he, and say, why may

not such and such a thing serve turn as well, or better? If you will needs be your own physician, and forsake God's direction, and cure yourselves, do it as well as you can, and what will become of it. It is a strange thing that a sottish sinner should think himself wiser than God, and take upon him to mend his word, and find out a better way to heaven than he hath prescribed him.

2. Can you have grace think you without the gift of God? If you cannot, do you think God will give it you in a way of disobedience, when you run from his appointed means; or rather in a way of duty and obedience, when you wait on him in that which he hath promised to bless? Find you such promises to those that turn their back on God's public ordinances, as we can shew you to them that diligently use them, if you can.

3. Is it not horrible pride in you to think that you are able to understand the word of God as well without a teacher, as with one? The eunuch said to Philip, when he asked him whether he understood what he read; "How can I except some man should guide me<sup>n</sup>?" And yet you think you can read the word at home as profitably without a guide: as if your children that go to school should say, 'We have the same books at home, and therefore we will not go to school, our master doth but teach us our grammar, and other books, and these we can read at home.' You are wise men that while, that know no more of your own ignorance; and humble men, that think you have no need of teaching; as if God had appointed his ministers and ordinances in vain.

4. It is a certain mark that you never heard or read as you should; or else your hearing or reading would have taught you, that both must go together, and not one shut out the other; and that the greatest, which is God's public work, must be preferred. It is a mark of a graceless heart and worse; even of one that hath much blinded common reason itself, when wretched sinners do know no more of their own necessity, but think they can live as well without God's public means as with it. If ever sermon or book had done you saving good, and you had the least spark of grace, and had felt the power of divine truth upon your soul, you would have been far from these conceits; you would feel

<sup>n</sup> Acts viii. 30, 31.



the necessity of the preaching of the word, as an hungry man feeleth the need of his food. Your own necessity would drive you, and the good which you feel by the word would draw you, and your love to it would not suffer you to forbear. If you were necessarily kept away by any business, you would take it for your loss, when it is not your sin, and would lament that you were deprived of that which you find so sweet and profitable. To find no profit by the preaching of the word of God, nor any great need of it, is a mark of a dead and graceless soul.

5. Look through the Scripture, and see whether the common way of conversion were not by the hearing the word of God preached.

6. If you may thus forbear it, then why may not all others? And then all Christian assemblies should be dissolved, and forborn; and then what churches should we have? And do you think that this is the will of God? All sorts of Christians in the world would have assemblies. Papists have their meetings, and Anabaptists have theirs; and even the Separatists have theirs; and would you have none? Doth not God expressly charge you, that “you forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is.” And to what end else hath he appointed ministers in his church?

7. Do you think that there should be any ministers, or not? If not, then no church, no baptism, and then no Christ, and no salvation. If there should, what should they do, if not preach the Gospel? Paul so far preferred it before other ordinances, that he thanketh God that he baptized not any himself save some few among them, because of an inconveniency that might have followed. “For God sent me not” saith he, “to baptise, but to preach the Gospel.” If you would have no preaching, you should have no ministers. And if you would have us preach, who should we preach to? to walls, or to men? If to men, why not to you as well as to others? Are others bound to hear any more than you? And how can we preach without hearers? Paul saith, and so must we, “Necessity is laid upon me, and woe to me if I preach not the Gospel.” And may we not then say, necessity is laid on you, and woe to you if you

hear not the Gospel? The Scripture saith, "How beautiful are the very feet of them that bring the glad tidings of peace!" And you can profit as well without them at home. Is not your spirit then contrary to God's Spirit, which thus speaks<sup>q</sup>: and what spirit is it that is contrary to God's Spirit but the devil's?

8. It was never God's end in writing the Scripture, nor the end of ministers in writing good books to keep you from the public hearing of the word. Each duty must know its place. I had rather the books that I have written were all burnt, than that men should by them be kept from the public and greater ordinances. Do not these very books which you say you read, command you to hear, and condemn those that do not hear? Do they not shew you that your words are the words of wickedness; and say, as much for hearing as now I do? What an hypocritical trick of you is this, when the Bible and other good books do command you to be constant hearers, and condemn you if you will not, that you will say you can profit more by reading these books than by hearing? What, can you profit more by reading your duty, when you refuse to do it, than by obedient doing it? Can you profit most by reading your own condemnation? You read in Scripture that "he that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination<sup>r</sup>." The truth is, you shew by this, that you do but make reading a pretence against hearing, when indeed you never did either of them with understanding and grace in your hearts.

9. What do you by withdrawing from the public assemblies, but excommunicate yourselves? And is it not our duty then to excommunicate or avoid you if you continue obstinate after admonition? Do you believe the communion of saints, and yet do you avoid it? Well, if you had any grace in your hearts, you would make the assembly and public worship of God, the delight of your souls, and it would do you so much good to call on God, and praise him with his people, and hear his instruction, that you could not be without it. You would do as David, when he was banished from the temple and worship of God, he crieth out, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my

<sup>q</sup> Rom. x. 15.

<sup>r</sup> Prov. xxviii. 9.

soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God : when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say to me, Where is thy God? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me; for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God; with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy-day<sup>s</sup>."

The sixth council at Constantinople decreed, that whosoever was absent from the congregation three Lord's days together without necessity; if he were a minister, should be put from the ministry, and if he were a private man, he should be cast from the communion of the church. If you cast out yourselves, blame not us if we cast you out.

*Object.* ' But, say some (that the Quakers have taught,) when a minister preacheth a month, or two, or three, or a year upon one text, how can he choose but add to the word of God, and therefore why should we hear them?'

*Ans.* A foolish cavil. What! is expounding and applying the word of God, adding to it? Do we tell you that any thing is the word of God that is not? Why doth not one of these ignorant objectors come and tell us in any one particular, what it is that we have added to the word of God? I am now persuading you to hear the word of God, is this adding to it? Doth not the word do the like? And doth not God in the word bid us acquaint you with it, and make it plain to you, and press it upon you? What if a lawyer bestow a day, or twenty days in pleading your cause before the judge, that he may save your estate, or your life from the malice of an adversary? Will you say, that this lawyer doth add to the law of the land by his pleading? What if the judge pass sentence according to law, and give the reason of it? Or what if he make a charge of many hours long wherever he comes; doth he add to, or diminish from the law by so doing? I must crave pardon of the hearers that are of common reason, that I have spent so much time in answering such senseless, sottish cavils as these. But they must consider that such people we have to deal with, and the more unreasonable and blockish they are, the greater need they have to be taught.

<sup>s</sup> Psal. xlii.



(2.) Another means that God hath appointed for conversion, is; The reading of his word, and of such good books as are written for the opening and applying of it. Though this must not thrust out hearing, yet is it an excellent means in its own time and place, or else God would not have appointed it as he hath done<sup>t</sup>. Many a soul hath had happy experience of the success of reading. The word read is the word, and therefore may convert, for “the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul<sup>u</sup>.” It is a very great privilege to have the truths of God before our eyes, where we may view them over and over at our leisure, till they be fastened in our hearts.

(3.) Another means that God hath appointed us to use for the obtainment of his grace, is, A serious inquiry of those that should and can instruct us. In common, easy matters, you may go either to ministers or private Christians as you see fit; but in matters of great difficulty, where private men are in danger of mistaking, or are not able to do it as your case requires, there it is your duty especially to repair to your teachers; or the most able, faithful ministers that you can well get, and make known your case to them, and desire their direction for your effectual recovery. Nicodemus came to Jesus by night for counsel, because he perceived that he was a teacher sent from God: and Christ thereupon did give him advice in the matter of the new birth. So Matt. xix. 16. Another inquireth what he shall do that he may have eternal life. The eunuch desires instruction of Philip<sup>x</sup>; and Paul of Ananias, and Cornelius of Peter, as was said before. The Jews that were pricked at the heart, ask Peter and the rest of the apostles what they shall do<sup>y</sup>. And the jailor asks Paul and Silas, what he shall do to be saved? See further, Mal. ii. 7. “The priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts.” Luke xii. 42. Col. i. 28. If poor unconverted sinners would but take this course, and go to their teachers for direction for their salvation, and resolve to practise it when it is given them, con-

<sup>t</sup> Exod. xxiv. 7. Josh. viii. 34, 35. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 30. Neh. viii. 3. 8. 18. ix. 3. Matt. xii. 3. 5. xxi. 26. xxii. 31. Acts xiii. 27. xv. 21. Deut. xxxi. 11. Acts viii. 30. Col. iv. 16. Rev. i. 3. 1 Tim. iv. 13.

<sup>u</sup> Psal. xix. 7.

<sup>x</sup> Acts viii.

<sup>y</sup> Acts ii. 37.

version would not be so rare, nor so many miscarry as now do; but most are so careless that they feel no need of it, and think it were but to trouble themselves and their teachers to no purpose; and others are so stout that they will not stoop to it; but if we send for them to come and speak with us, that we may afford them the best advice we can, they ask us by what authority we do it; and think it too much to come near us, and speak to us: others are so sinfully bashful, that they cannot open their mouths, when their salvation is concerned in the matter; and others are conceited beforehand that ministers will but slight them, and are too stout to speak to them, at least with any seriousness and tenderness of their case. And thus satan keeps men from grace, by keeping them from the means of grace.

(4.) Another means of conversion, is, The frequent company of those that fear God, and would afford us their help in the way to heaven, and conference with them about these things. Company hath a transforming power, and the speeches and examples of heavenly Christians, will do much to bring others to a consideration of their ways. Commonly men are, or seem to be, such as their familiar company is.

(5.) Another means for conversion, is, Frequent and earnest prayers to God. When we know we want grace, and that God is the giver of it, what should we do but betake ourselves to him, and ask saving grace and "wisdom of him, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not?" I know some would persuade us that we may not exhort unconverted men to pray; because their prayer is an abomination to God, and without faith they cannot please God. To whom I answer briefly. 1. Nature itself teacheth a man in misery to cry to him, that is able to relieve him, and to beg pardon of him whom he hath offended, and especially when he knoweth that he is of a merciful nature: and may we not persuade men to that which the very light of nature doth direct them to, and the law of nature oblige them to? Or will these men go against the light and law of nature? 2. Scripture commandeth these to pray, and seek God, "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his ways; and the unrighteous man his thoughts<sup>a</sup>." Peter exhorts Simon Magus to

<sup>1</sup> James i. 5.

<sup>a</sup> Isa. lv. 6, 7. So Hos. x. 12. iii. 5. Amos v. 6.

“ pray, if perhaps the thoughts of his heart may be forgiven him,” when he pronounceth him “ in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity <sup>b</sup>.” 3. We do not exhort men to pray, while they continue wicked, but to return with prayer in their mouths from their wickedness. Our exhortation is as those before mentioned, “ Let the wicked forsake his way ;” and thus seek the Lord. “ Repent of this thy wickedness,” and so pray for pardon as Peter exhorteth. When we bid them pray, we bid them desire, for desire is the soul of prayer, and words are but the body ; and when we exhort them to desire grace, we exhort them to the beginning of grace. Prayer is a returning act, and when we exhort them to pray, we exhort them to return, and by prayer to begin the work, and so this beginning may be a means of the rest of the change that is yet behind.

*Direct.* 1. Having shewed you the first hindrance of conversion, I come to give you the first direction, which is contrary thereto ; and that is, That you would presently fall upon the use of these means, that God hath appointed you to use for your conversion. Are you sensible of the necessity of it ? and are you truly willing to be converted, or are you not ? If you would, let us see your willingness in the use of the means without delay. Particularly, let me entreat of you these following things.

(1.) See that you be constant hearers of the word preached, and take delight in the public assembly of the church, and let nothing but necessity keep you at home. Live under the ablest ministry that you can : and neglect not one such opportunity for your souls. If you be absent without necessity but from one sermon, God may justly deny you the blessing of the rest : and you know not which it is that is most suitable to your condition, and therefore miss not any. The devil is aware what a minister is studying about all the week, and when he seeth that we have provided that which is likeliest to do you good, he will do all that he can to keep you away that day. He will find one business or other, or tempt you to be negligent ; because he is afraid, lest if you come, you should be converted. Miss not one sermon, therefore, lest you miss that one that should have done you good. And as you hear, so take heed

<sup>b</sup> Acts viii. 22.



how you hear, and attend to it as to a message sent from God, concerning your salvation; and "set your hearts to all the words that you hear, for it is not a vain thing, but it is for your life." "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," saith Christ often in cases of greatest moment! And he that will not hear, and diligently hear a message from free grace for the saving of his soul, is unworthy to have ears.

(2.) If you would be converted by the word, do not let it slip as soon as you have heard it; but call it to remembrance again, and bring it home to your hearts: ponder of what you have heard, and speak of it to those about you. And if you be not able to remember it, through the weakness of your memories, go to some of your neighbours' houses that do repeat it, that you may have the benefit of their assistance. Have not you as much need as they? and should not you be at as much pains as they? Make the word your own before you leave it.

(3.) Be much in reading the word of God, and such practical books as will help you to apply it? And lay to heart the truths you shall read.

(4.) Especially do all this on the Lord's day, which is purposely set apart for such holy works. Lose none of that precious season of grace: but when the public worship is over, betake yourselves with your families, and in secret to the improvement of it; and take as much pains that day for your souls, as you do on the rest of the days of the week for your bodies. You cannot then pretend that you have no leisure, when it is at a time that is wholly to be employed in such things. O make the best of that day, and seek after the knowledge of God therein, if you would be partakers of his grace.

(5.) Will you go, in case you want direction, to those that are able to direct you? Especially to your teachers, and ask them what course you must take for conversion, and tell them your case, and the hindrances that you meet with, and resolve to obey the counsel that they shall give you?

(6.) Will you betake yourselves daily to God in hearty prayer, and beg of him that he would give you converting grace? Beseech him to open your eyes, and shew you the

greatness of your sin and misery, till you be unfeignedly humbled; and that he would shew you the need of his grace in Christ, till you can thirst after him and his righteousness; and that he would shew you the certainty and excellency of his glory, till your hearts be set upon it above all? O beg hard of God that he would not let you live unconverted any longer, lest death should find you in that miserable state. Beseech him to pardon all your former rebellions and resistance of his Spirit, and now at last to give you that grace that you have set so lightly by; and bring you into the hatred of those ways of sinful pleasure or profit, which had your hearts before.

These are the means that God hath appointed to bring you into a state of saving grace. What say you? Are you willing? Are you resolved to use these means, or are you not? If you think that this is too much ado, and that your salvation is not worth it, you may take your ease and go without it. But if God have not given you up to so much unreasonableness, but that you had rather be at the sweet and comfortable pains of duty, than endure the intolerable pains of hell: if you do not set more by the ease of your flesh for a few days, than the ease and peace of soul and body for ever, then take my counsel, and set upon these means without delay. Look who doth most for God, and their salvation, of all that you know, and strive to do as much as they. You have the same God, and the same law, and the same, and greater necessity, than they: you are farther behind hand: you have more work undone which must be done: your danger is greater, and your souls should be as precious to you, as theirs to them. O, therefore, take time while you have it, and set yourselves to the work.

*Hindrance* 2. The second hindrance of conversion, which I shall mention, is bad company. It is a dangerous thing to be wilfully a companion of ignorant, careless, ungodly men. If they will say nothing directly against that which is good, yet will they do much to hinder your salvation, by keeping your thoughts, and talk, and delight upon other things, and by giving you an evil example, as if these matters were not necessary. Vain talk, and vain practices, settle the minds of men in vanity, and in a forgetfulness and neglect of heavenly things. Besides, they will be enticing

you to such kind of business and delight, as strengthen the flesh, and contradict the Spirit, and fasten you in sin, and are the common causes of the perdition of the world. The noise of their foolish laughter and giddy discourse, will drown the voice of conscience, and of the Spirit of God. It is hard keeping the heart in a sense of duty, or the evil of sin, in the midst of sin. As it is certainly a vain and graceless heart that delighteth most in vain company, so such will make the heart more vain. When men sit over their pots, cherishing their flesh, (which they once vowed to fight against as their enemies,) pouring out a deal of foolish, senseless discourse; the sense of the evil of sin and of the love of Christ, and of the worth of glory, is then far from the heart: and if they do make any mention of God or holy things, it is commonly irreverently and most abusively, taking the name of God in vain, and sinning more by their Scripture discourse, than by any other. And it is a wonder if the devil and their fleshly reason do not lead them to plead against God, and to take part with the flesh, and perhaps to make a scorn of godliness. O what a dangerous thing it is to live among such company as will be still hindering, but never helping, in the way to heaven! Especially among those who are worldly or sensual, or that are enemies to godliness, and set themselves against it to their power. In a way that is up hill, and all against the interest and inclination of our flesh, and in which we are so weak and backward ourselves, we had need of all the help that we can get, and a little hindrance may be our undoing. But when poor sinners shall live among such, where they shall hear almost no discourse, but vain, and almost no talk of religion, but in distaste and contempt of it, despising the way to heaven, which is in effect, to despise heaven itself; how can it be expected that such should be brought to the knowledge of the truth, and the love of those ways that they hear so much reproached? I know God can do it, and sometimes doth, where people are unavoidably cast into such company; but if men will choose such, when they may avoid it, the case is dangerous indeed. “He that walketh with wise men shall be yet wiser, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed” Some of these ungodly wretches are so cunning in their discourse, that weak, silly people be not able to dis-



cern their folly. Some of them also have some worldly interest in them, and therefore are the liker to do them hurt. When those that they dwell with, and those that they depend upon, and those that seem to love them are ungodly, and speak against the way of salvation, it commonly takes so much with the ignorant, that they either say as they say, and are of their minds, or at least it hindereth them from thorough conversion, and setting themselves diligently to the saving of their souls. Thousands have been everlastingly undone by evil company.

*Direct. 2.* The second direction, therefore, that I shall give you is this; Do all that you can to avoid the company of those that would hinder you, and to live in the company of those that would help you, in the matters of your salvation. I do not mean, that a servant that is bound should go from his master before he hath served according to their agreement; nor that a child should forsake his parents that are ungodly; nor that a woman should forsake her husband, or a man his wife on this account; for here they are not at their own choice, but are fixed to their relations, which tie them to duty and faithfulness to their places; but I mean, that no man shall willingly cast himself into evil company, that can avoid it. Particularly. 1. If a master be to take a servant, take not such as are ungodly, if you can have better. If a servant be to choose a master, come not into an ungodly family, if you can help it. If young people be intended to marry, take heed of being yoked unequally, and joining yourselves with the members of the devil, and the enemies of Christ, and those that are likely to be hinderers of your salvation, and so to prove the damnation of your souls. You will be backward enough and bad enough in the best company that you get; what then will you be in the worst? Especially when it is so near you, and continually with you, and that of your own choice. I confess a minister or other Christian when he hath a call to endeavour the good of such, and to reprove their sin, may go among them as a physician among the sick; and so did Christ himself when he was on earth. But to make them our companions willingly, we may not. Grace is hardly got, and hardly kept, and more hardly increased in such company as this.

On the other side, get into the company of such as will further you. “The tongue of the just is as choice silver; the heart of the wicked is little worth; the lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for want of wisdom. The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness. Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge<sup>d</sup>.” If you were children of God yourselves, you would delight in those that are such. For, “by this we know that we are translated from death to life, because we love the brethren.” And David saith, “the saints on the earth, and the excellent are all his delight<sup>e</sup>.” Get therefore, if it be possible, into the company of such; with them you shall hear that which may humble you for sin, and you shall hear that of Christ which may tend to kindle the love of him in your breasts; and you shall hear that of the goodness of God, and his way, and the privilege of the saints; the precious promises of the Gospel, the life of grace, and the hopes of everlasting glory which may make your hearts to burn within you. When you live with those that by their example disgrace sin to you, and draw you from it, and watch over you against it, and that will be still minding you of those truths that should sanctify your hearts, O what an advantage is this to your salvation! If you be ignorant, they will teach you; if you are unskilful in prayer, or other holy duties, they will help you by their instruction and example. Choose, therefore, the best company you can get, if you be free, and all little enough. Live among that company on earth, that you must live with in heaven, if ever you come thither.

*Hindrance* 3. The next hindrance of conversion, is, A gross ignorance of those truths which should be the instruments of their conversion. He that turneth to God, must needs know God; and he that turneth from sin, must needs know the evil and danger of sin. No man will make so great a change, and not know why. No man will part with his present contents, and set upon a course that his nature is against; nor forsake all the world, even that which is dearest to him, till he know that there is a flat necessity of so doing, or know of something better to be had by the

<sup>d</sup> Prov. x. 20, 21. 32. xiv. 7.<sup>e</sup> Psal. xvi. 3.

change. When we find that even men of knowledge are too often ungodly, and they will not leave sin when they know the evil of it, and know that everlasting damnation is threatened against it. How then can they forsake it that know not this? When many that can speak of the vanity of this world, and the glory of the saints in the life to come, and the amiableness of God, and his all-sufficiency to make them happy, do yet cleave to this world, and neglect God and the glory which they so extol, how then can we expect that they should turn to God, and set their minds to seek his kingdom that do not know him? All the wickedness in the world is cherished by ignorance, total or partial. Even those that say they know these things, and yet live ungodly, do not soundly know them, but hold them as an opinion, and not as a point of saving faith. O, if poor sinners, that set so light by the everlasting kingdom, did but thoroughly know what they slight, they would quickly change their mind and courses. If you knew heaven as well as you knew your own houses and lands, and if you saw what the souls do now enjoy that depart in the faith, as you see what is done in the houses where you dwell, I would not thank the worst of you all to become far more devout and diligent than the best in the town or country is now. I would not thank the vilest worldling to become heavenly; or the vilest drunkard to become sober; or the scorner of godliness to be the most godly in the country. If you knew heaven as well as you know earth, it were no thanks to you if every family of you were a society of saints, but this cannot be expected. God will not have us live by sight and sense, but by faith. But yet a knowledge of divine revelation we may and must have. No man loveth sin but for want of knowing what he loveth. No man doteth upon this deceitful world, but for want of knowing the worthlessness of it; no man makes light of eternal glory, but for want of knowing what he makes light of; and no man is against a holy life, but he that knoweth not what it is, nor what will be the end of it. O, sirs, if you knew God, your hearts would be inflamed in love to him. There are some of you now stand wondering at the diligence of the godly, and some of you are secretly reproaching them, and casting forth your ignorant scorns against them; but if you did but know what it



is that they are doing, and who it is that setteth them on work, and what it is that they make all this ado for, you would wonder more at your own folly, and would be as forward as they, and would presently take that course which you now reproach. Alas ! poor sinners durst not sport with sin if they knew what they did ; they durst not run in crowds to damnation if they knew what they did. The kingdom of satan is a kingdom of darkness ; and his works are the works of darkness ; and himself the ruler of the darkness of this world, and under chains of darkness is he reserved to the judgment of the great day ; and the mist and blackness of darkness is reserved to him and his servants for ever. “ If the Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost ; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the glorious Gospel of Christ who is the image of God should shine unto them. He that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth<sup>e</sup>.” They that are converted can truly say, “ we were sometimes darkness, but now we are light in the Lord<sup>f</sup>.” For they are “ translated from the power of darkness.”

*Direct.* 3. If ever you would be converted, labour for true knowledge : come into the light that your deeds may be manifested ; and that your own hearts may be manifest to yourselves. Nothing but light will expel your darkness, the devil haunteth men in the night of ignorance, and seldom appeareth in the open daylight : bring in but the saving light of knowledge, and he will vanish and be gone : the first part of saving grace is illumination. The opening of the eye causeth the opening of the heart : Oh if you had but a little of the heavenly light of the saints, it would shew you that which would turn your hearts ; you could not be of the same mind as you are, if you had but saving light : now you think highly of the world, and meanly of the world to come ; you now think nothing too much for your flesh, and all too much that is done for heaven ; you could not be of this mind if you had the light of the Spirit : you labour now for that which profiteth not, and neglect that which would pay

<sup>e</sup> Luke xxii. 53. John i. 5. iii. 19. Rom. xiii. 12. 2 Cor. vi. 14. Eph. vi. 12. Col. i. 13. 2 Pet. ii. 4. 17. Jude 6. 13. Matt. xxii. 13. cxv. 20. John xii. 35.

<sup>f</sup> Eph. v. 8.

you for your labour: you vilify Christ, and grace, and holiness, while you magnify the dreams and dung of the world; you could not do thus if you were savingly illuminated. I beseech you, therefore, if ever you would be converted and saved, labour presently to know the Lord, and his will and ways; lament your former ignorance and negligence which did maintain it. It is not so great a shame for you to be ignorant how to do your work in the world; no, nor how to eat or drink, or how to dress yourselves, as it is to be ignorant of the kingdom of heaven, and the way thereto: you will never hit the way to heaven if you do not know it: he that knoweth most, knoweth too little; what then will they do that know almost nothing at all? O think not knowledge a needless thing, but make out after it, and rest not till you do obtain it; to which end you must use these means following.

(1.) Be much in hearing and reading the word of God, as was before directed; for that is it that “giveth light to the simple<sup>a</sup>”; this “will make you wise unto salvation<sup>b</sup>.”

(2.) Read good books that are written for the expounding and applying of the Scripture. Many have received much information by these. (3.) Converse with wise and godly men: these are the means of knowledge that were before made mention of.

*Object.* ‘We are not learned, and therefore God will not require much knowledge at our hands.’

*Ans.* You may say, ‘Therefore God will not require learning at your hands, further than you are without it through your own neglect.’ But first, every man that hath a reasonable soul should know God that made him; and the end for which he should live; and know the way to his eternal happiness as well as the learned: have not you souls to save or lose as well as the learned have? 2. God hath made plain his will to you in his word; he hath given you teachers and many other helps; so that you have no excuse if you are ignorant; you must know how to be Christians if you are no scholars. You may hit the way to heaven in English, though you have no skill in Hebrew or Greek: but in the darkness of ignorance you can never hit it. 3. Will not God judge you as well as the learned? And will not

<sup>a</sup> Psal. cxix. 105. 130.

<sup>b</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 15.

he require an account of the talents which you possess ? He hath set you on his work as well as others, and therefore you must know how to do his work. If you think therefore that you may be excused from knowledge, you may as well think that you may be excused from love and from all obedience ; for there can be none of this without knowledge.

*Object.* ‘ But I am not of so quick an apprehension as others ; and therefore I cannot learn so well. And I have been brought up in ignorance, and therefore it cannot be expected from me.’

*Ans.* Can any man have excuse for ignorance that liveth among such teaching, and books, and Christian company as we now do ? You may as well shut your eyes at noon-day, and say you cannot do your work for want of light. Were you but as willing to get the knowledge of God and heavenly things as you are to know how to work in your trade, you would have set yourselves to it before this day, and you would have spared no cost or pains till you had got it. But you account seven years little enough to learn your trade, and will not bestow one day in seven in diligent learning the matters of your salvation. Is there not many an opportunity of getting knowledge, which you miss of through your own neglect ? You are at home or upon other business, when you might have been hearing the word of God, and in the company of diligent Christians, that are inquiring and learning these necessary things ; and when you neglect the means, you think to be excused for your ignorance. The way that God commandeth you for getting knowledge, is, that you receive the word of God, and hide his commandments with you ; and incline your ears to wisdom, and apply your hearts to understand, and that you cry after knowledge : and lift up your voice for understanding, and seek it as silver, and search for it as hid treasures. And if you would do thus, the Lord hath promised that you shall understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God<sup>i</sup>. Methinks light itself should be pleasant to you. Did Adam so desire unnecessary knowledge as to undo himself and his posterity to procure it ? and will not you so desire that knowledge which is necessary to your salvation, and by which you may be recovered from that miserable estate<sup>k</sup> ? How many years study will men spend

<sup>i</sup> Prov. ii. 1—5.

<sup>k</sup> Acts xxvi. 18.



to know a little of the creature, and will you not take pains to know the Maker and End of the whole creation?

*Object.* 'But we hope we may be saved without so much knowledge.'

*Ans.* Not without knowing the necessary, fundamental points of Christianity; and a desire to know more. Doth Christ say, "It is life eternal to know God and Jesus Christ<sup>1</sup>," and do you think to have life eternal without it? God saith of people that have no understanding, "That he that made them will not save them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour<sup>m</sup>:" and that "Christ shall come in flaming fire to render vengeance to them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ<sup>n</sup>." And that they shall be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord."

*Hindrance* 4. The next hindrance of conversion, is, Unbelief: when men will not be persuaded that the word of God is true, but doubt of the things which he hath revealed to them, concerning the everlasting state of men. Men have but a slight opinion of the truth of the word of God, which will not serve turn to prevail against their fleshly inclination.

Three great enemies of the Christian faith we have to deal with, which if we overcome not, we lose all. 1. The one is our own unbelieving hearts, and our carnal inclinations and interests; flesh and blood cannot reveal the things of God to us, nor discern them when they are revealed<sup>o</sup>. A sound belief of the life to come, and of the whole Christian faith, would certainly turn the heart to God, and turn the course of all your lives. It is this faith that purifieth the heart<sup>p</sup>; and without it no wonder if the word be unprofitable<sup>q</sup>, as to the producing of any further work of sanctification, for it must first beget faith before it can do the rest. 2. Another enemy to the Christian faith, is the devil; who believeth and trembleth himself, but laboureth to keep others unbelieving and secure. So great is his malice against Christ and our souls, that when he seeth that he cannot make a poor sinner forget God, and make light of his word any longer, he flieth openly in the very face of God, and disturbeth the soul with blasphemous suggestions,

<sup>1</sup> John xvii. 3.

<sup>m</sup> Isa. xxvii. 11.

<sup>n</sup> 2 Thess. i. 8, 9.

<sup>o</sup> Matt. xvi. 17. 1 Cor. ii. 14.

<sup>p</sup> Acts xv. 9.

<sup>q</sup> Heb. iv. 3.

and tempteth them to doubt whether there be a God, or not, or whether Scripture be his word, or whether it be true. It was his first way of deceiving, to make the woman doubt of the truth of God's word, which had told her, that if she sinned, she should die. And experience teacheth him to follow on this course, which he hath found to be so successful ; most of the world are destroyed by this unbelief. How sensible is many a poor Christian of the incessant malice of satan in this point ; when he followeth them from day to day with such violence, that their hearts are ready to be overwhelmed with the horror of the temptation. But the ungodly do yield to them without so much reluctance.

3. Another sort of enemies of the Christian faith, are, notorious ungodly men ; such as either by the power of their own unbelieving hearts, have prevailed against the light that should have drawn them to believe, or such as have by the reasonings of infidels, been made infidels themselves, and are desirous to make others such as they are : these are the devil's instruments to draw men to unbelief.

*Direct.* 4. If ever you would be savingly converted, see that you soundly believe the word of God : believe soundly that there is an everlasting happiness, which is the reward of a holy life, and an everlasting torment, which is the punishment of ungodliness ; and you cannot choose but forsake your ungodliness, and become holy. To this end observe these few things following. 1. Watch over your carnal hearts with jealousy : do not take your hearts to be clear and impartial ; and therefore commit not the matter to their trust : they are naturally enemies to the word of God, and therefore no wonder if they hardly believe it. 2. Do not think too highly of your own understandings, as if you were able to comprehend the depths of God ; or were competent judges of each passage in his word, before you have had time and means to understand them, or before you have improved your time and means by diligent study and prayer to God ; search the Scripture, as a learner, and not as a foolish caviller. 3. Abhor the very first temptation of satan that tends to draw your souls to unbelief, and suffer not his malice to make too deep impressions in your fancies : cast out such horrid thoughts with detestation, and give them not the least countenance or willing entertainment. 4. De-

test the company of atheistical men, or any infidels that dare open their mouths to speak against the word of God. Yea, though they pretend to do it but by way of question. Hear every word against the Scripture from such deceivers, as if you heard it from the devil himself, or as if you saw him behind them, prompting them what to say, and putting them on: for it is he that doth it by their mouth. As it was satan that caused Judas to betray Christ, and filled the heart of Ananias and Sapphira to lie against the Holy Ghost<sup>r</sup>, so is it satan that filleth the hearts of these unbelievers to speak against Christ, and to contradict the word, which the Holy Ghost hath delivered. 5. Labour to understand the sense of Scripture, and the great evidence of its truth, and of the Christian faith; and have recourse to those for your confirmation that are of better understandings herein than yourselves, and read those books that are written to that end, to manifest the divine authority of Scripture. 6. Submit to the truth, which you know, and strive not against the light, but let it have its due impress upon your souls, that you may have the experience of its power and excellency to confirm you: by these means you may do much to overcome your unbelief; and if that were once done, the rest of the work would go on apace.

*Hindrance* 5. The next hindrance, is, Inconsiderateness: of which I spoke in the beginning, but shall add somewhat in this place. When truths are not considered of, they are but as medicines that lie in a box, and therefore are not like to work; it is the work of consideration to bring down truths from the understanding to the heart, and to hold them there till they do work. We cannot get poor sinners so much as soberly to bethink them of their ways, and to call to mind the things we speak to them, and consider of them for their good. Because I intend, if the Lord will, to speak hereafter more fully of this subject, I shall pass it over now thus briefly.

*Direct.* 5. If ever you would be converted, use to consider frequently and seriously of those truths of God that must do the work. The word of God is pure and powerful to convert the soul, but can you look it should convert you, if you will not so much as soberly think upon it? How can

<sup>r</sup> Luke xxii. 3. Acts v. 3.



that work upon your hearts, which is out of your minds? It is you that must join with us for your own conversion, and do the rest of the work, when you come home, and not think that a sermon can do it, when you forget it, and never mind it more. If you seek to the ablest physician for your body, he can but give you physic, it is you that must take it and keep it, and observe directions till it work. If you will presently cast it up again, how can it do you good? We tell you of those truths that are most useful to your conversion, and if you will take them home, and keep them, and ponder of them when you are alone, till they sink into your hearts, and take rooting, you may be happy men; but if you will cast them all up again, and will not be persuaded to bestow now and then a few of your deepest serious thoughts for the further entertainment of them, how should they do you saving good? If I could prevail with this congregation to be but considerate, and now and then to bestow some time to get the truth to their hearts, I should have great hopes of the conversion of you all; for light is stronger than darkness: if you would but open the window by consideration, and let it in, you should find the darkness presently dispelled, and it would be day with you that have sat in the shadow of death. The Spirit of God is able to overcome the flesh, and Christ is able to conquer satan, and bind him, and cast him out of your souls. And if you would but set in, and take his part, and open him the door by sober consideration, when he knocks and seeks admittance, and not discourage him by your wilful neglect, you would feel the working of his power to your salvation. There have now been many sermons preached to you on this text; have you considered of them when you came home? Have you taken yourselves alone, and asked your own hearts, whether you are converted or not? And have you bethought you of the blessedness of the converted, and the misery of the unconverted, which you have heard? Have you dwelt upon these thoughts, till they have sunk down into your hearts? If you have, I dare say this doctrine hath done you good; but if you have not, what wonder if you be unconverted still, and if you live and die so, and if you be damned among the unconverted, when you will not be persuaded so much as seriously to consider of the matter? If it be not a matter

worthy the thinking of, it is not worth the hearing, and if this be not to be thought on, I know not what is. We do not go home with you from church into your houses, nor see what you think of there in secret, nor whether you fall down there before the Lord, and pray over the sermons that you hear; nor do we hear what you say of it to others; but God followeth you home, and he seeth and heareth all; and he that is here ready with his grace to enter into your hearts, if you do not resist or slight him, is there also ready to help you to make use of what you have heard, if you do not wilfully throw it off yourselves. O, did you but earnestly consider what God is, and what your duty is, and what you were made for, and whither you are going, and what sin and the world are, and what grace is, and what Christ is, and hath done for you, and what death is, and what judgment is, and what heaven is, and what hell is, how is it possible you should continue unconverted? How is it possible but you should presently run out of your present carnal, worldly state, as you should do out of a house that is all on fire over your head; and should become most zealous and diligent Christians? Certainly consideration would do very much to your conversion. "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies, I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments."

*Hindrance 6.* The next great impediment to your conversion, is, Hardness of heart, and searedness of conscience. Though every man have some of this in his original corruption, yet resisting of light and motions of grace doth usually bring men to a far greater measure of it; both by the nature of the thing, and by the just judgment of God. When men have sinned often or long against knowledge and conscience, and receive not the truth in the love of it that they may be saved, but suppress the light, and live not up to the convictions that are upon their consciences, it is usual for such to grow blockish and senseless, and for the brutish part so far to prevail, that they are in a sort "unreasonable men." Men are naturally dead in sin, but when they have sinned wilfully, they grow more dead; that is, they are more insensible, and have more of death upon them. And when they fall, especially from former conviction and profession, they

“become twice dead, and plucked up by the roots<sup>u</sup> ;” and then the work of conversion is hard indeed. When the heart is thus hardened, no words are much regarded by them : no saying will serve ; you speak as to a post. We shoot our arrows as at a wall of flint, where they will not enter : the dew of holy instructions doth fall upon a stone where no fruit can be expected. You cannot devise what to say that will touch them, because they are stupid, and will not lay it to heart : you cannot tell how to sharpen your words to make them enter. The Lord have mercy upon poor wretches, for their case is lamentable. It would make a man of consideration wonder to see what piercing, weighty truths a hard heart will make light of. Speak to them as from the God that made them, and they regard you not : speak to them of their everlasting state, and they regard you not : tell them of the heinous evil of sin, and all its aggravations, and they take it all but as words of course ; and will say, ‘ God help us, we are all sinners,’ and there is an end. Tell them of the infinite love of God, and the precious blood of Christ that was shed for them, and the free pardon that is offered, and the rich abundant grace, which they might have, and it will increase their presumption and security, but it will not raise their estimation of it, nor quicken their desire after it, nor make them forsake all and follow Christ. Tell them of an everlasting state of glory, which they may obtain in the presence of the Lord, and they make light of it, and hear it as they do a story of the fortunate islands, or the Elysian fields : tell them of the endless torments of the damned that despised grace in the day of their visitation, and either they feel not, and fear not what you say ; or if they fear a little, it is not so much as to move them from their courses, nor bring them to a change of heart and life. O what a sad work it is to have to deal with a hardened heart ! It is to hew at a stone ; and to cleave a knotty block that will not receive the wedge ; to plough and sow on a rock, where you cannot make the plough to enter. This is the trouble of a preacher’s life ; this dulleth his hopes, this wearieth and tireth him ; this maketh him say, ‘ I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought :’ and this hath broken many of their hearts. Alas ! to see

<sup>u</sup> Jude 12.



our poor people within a few days or years of eternal fire, which they might prevent if they would look about them in time, and we cannot get them to lay it to heart! Alas! to hear what a feeling they must have for ever, and yet we cannot get them to feel or fear, and prevent it now. Oh! thinks a poor minister, if I could but awaken him, and make him regard the case of his soul, I should have hope yet to prevent his damnation: for no man can destroy him against his will; and the light is so clear, that methinks he should see it, if he would not wilfully shut his eyes. But alas! we cannot get them to regard it. How sad a case is it to think of an everlasting glory, which they might have, and how freely Christ hath purchased it, and how freely he doth offer it to them, and they might have it if they would, and if they did not wilfully slight it and reject it. And yet that we cannot awaken them to consideration, nor bring such matters as these to their hearts; I have formerly said it, and I will say it again, that I profess that I often marvel that the weight of everlasting matters doth not rather overmatch your spirits, and overwhelm them. I have wondered that it doth not even amaze and astonish you to think how great a change you are near, and what a thing it is to be everlastingly in heaven or in hell: and yet we cannot get our people to feel or lay to heart these things. O, what lamentable hearts are these! What will they regard and feel if they will not feel everlasting matters? What words will ever pierce their hearts if the words of the living God will not do it, and the words by which they know they shall be judged? Do but call one of them by some disgraceful name, and he will quickly feel: threaten him with death; promise him but a hundred pounds, and he will regard it: but let God declare his sin and misery to him, and he will not feel it: let God threaten him with hell, and promise him everlasting life, if he will return, and he will not regard it. O, what a happy life might a minister have if it were not for hard-hearted men! If we could deal with them, but on such terms for their souls as we do for their bodies, how certainly should we prevail, and then how comfortable would our employments be. If a lawyer tell them their evidence, or cause is nought, they will hear and regard him: if a physician tell them they must take physic or die, they will lay

it to heart. If their landlord tell them they must pay their rent, or be turned out of their houses, they can feel what he saith; but if we tell them that they must repent and be converted, or be condemned for ever, and miss of salvation, we cannot be regarded; their hearts are blocked up from us, by the world, and pride, and lust, and sin, and we cannot get into their bosom: we know not how to come at their hearts. Alas! if it were not for their own sakes this trouble were small to us; for what good else should it do us to trouble them, and break their hearts and change them? But when we consider, if we could but convert them we should save them; and if we could help them to grace, we might meet them in everlasting glory, this maketh us long for better success. Fain then would we get them to hear, and regard, and feel what we say, that it might go well with them for ever; but we cannot. Alas! to the grief of our hearts we cannot. It is a tiring life to have none but hard-hearted sinners to persuade; we lose our study for them; we lose our breath upon them. Some of them can think of other things while we are speaking to them of the greatest matters in all the world; and some of them can drop asleep under it, and some of them sit as dull as blocks; and some of them will look upon us as if they were affected, and yet it never goes to the quick; and some of them that seem to be somewhat sensible, do shake off all again in a few days time, and when they have been awhile among their old companions, and about their old business, they shew us that they are the old men, and that it is one thing to be a little affrighted for a few days, and another thing to have a changed, softened heart. Were it not for this sin of hardness of heart, it were not possible that so many sermons should be lost; nor that so many ministers in England should see so little fruit of their labours. Why, alas! sinners, what else can be the matter? We come on as reasonable an errand as any men in the world can come on; it is but that men would accept salvation that is freely purchased and offered them, and that they would be content to change a life of sin and misery, for a life of grace and everlasting glory. One would think that such a message as this should take with every man and woman in the congregation; especially when it is sent from God himself, and brought to them with such evidence of

certain truth, and themselves profess to believe what we say. One would think a message so reasonable as this should prevail with every man in a whole country or kingdom where it comes : and yet it doth not. Nay, alas ! how few are they with whom it doth prevail ! If we came hither to offer every man in this congregation that he should live in a palace as a prince, on condition he would leave his cottage and accept it, who would make any question of the success ? I should not doubt but every man and woman of you would yield : and yet when we come in the name of God to offer them grace and glory on free cost, if they will but let go sin and the world, they will not be persuaded ;—say what we can, though they will not tell us so, yet they will not be persuaded : and whence can this come but from a hardened heart ? Did we not speak to men that have lost their sense and reason, and are past feeling, it could not be : when every man naturally desireth his own happiness, and yet men will not be happy when it is offered them.

Yea, this is not all ; but when the heart is thus hardened, some of them are given over to such a desperate case that they hear the word with a malicious mind ; and instead of receiving it in power to their salvation, they do but cavil at it, and pick quarrels with it, to their condemnation ; and prate among their companions against that which they understand not, nor ever laid to heart. If a physician would heal them for nothing, and they should maliciously reproach him or quarrel with all that he doth for them, did they not deserve to be left to perish by the disease ? If they had forfeited their lives and a free pardon were offered them, what would you think of him, that instead of a thankful accepting of the pardon, would pick quarrels with it, and prove it nonsense, or scorn the messenger ? This is the case of many of our hearers. Poor souls, their lives declare their misery, and God sendeth us to them with the offers of a remedy, and one goes home and makes a jest of it ; and another foolishly cavilleth against it, and another thinks it a needless thing ; and this is our success with hard-hearted men. Now the Lord have mercy upon you that hear me in this congregation, and grant that this may be none of your case, or if it be, that he would powerfully and quickly cure it : for it is one of the saddest cases in this world : and of all sorts of



men, there are few or none that we have so little hope of as hard-hearted men. If a man were never so much mistaken and never so far out of the way, yet if he had but any regard or feeling with him, we might hope by the force of reason and the light of the word of God, to bring him to himself, and set him in the way : but when men are past feeling, what shall we say to them, or what can we do for them? Nay, it is not only words but even the works of God that are lost upon such men : mercies do but harden them, and judgments themselves do but harden them, which one would think, should humble and soften them, if any outward means could do it. When the Jews had sinned, God punished them with war, and let loose plundering, robbing soldiers upon their estates, and destroyers upon their bodies; and yet they were so far from being humbled and softened by it, that they did not so much as regard the cause, nor the hand that did it. “ Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? Did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned? For they would not walk in his way, neither were they obedient to his law. Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle, and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not, and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.\*” And hath not this been our own case in England? Who would have thought, if people had but had life, and sense, and reason in them, but that so many years’ war should have humbled them for their sins, and made them willing to learn and to be reformed? Who would have thought but they would have searched and tried their ways, and turned to the Lord that did afflict them; and have loved his word, and have given up themselves to his will, and even in the open assemblies have voluntarily acknowledged and bewailed their iniquities? And yet we see how many are the same. As the sword found them, so it hath left them, if not worse: and if the fury of God’s anger cannot be felt, no wonder if they cannot feel our preaching: and if they lay not to heart the fire that burneth them up, what wonder if they lay not to heart the message we deliver? If Peter and Paul, yea, or Christ himself, had preached to one of these hardened sinners, they would have made light of it; or gone home

\* Isa. xlii. 24, 25.

and ignorantly cavilled against them as they do against the ministers now, unless the powerful arm of God had inwardly concurred to the softening of their hearts : for indeed they did thus by Christ and his apostles while they were upon earth : and by all the prophets that went before them ; Ezek. iii. 7. saith the Lord, ver. 4. “ Son of man, get thee to the house of Israel, and speak with my words to them. Not to many people of a strange speech and a hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened to thee, but the house of Israel will not hearken to thee, for they will not hearken to me, for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted.” And Christ himself when he had wrought even miracles to confirm his doctrine, was put to grieve for the hardness of their hearts<sup>y</sup>. And when the apostles preached the Gospel of salvation, “ divers were hardened and believed not, but spoke evil of the way of God before the people,” till the apostles resolved to leave them to themselves<sup>z</sup>. So that, hardness of heart is the great impediment of conversion.

*Direct.* 6. The advice therefore that I would give you for this work of conversion, is, That you especially take heed of this dangerous case of an hardened heart. In the name of God see that you run not into this miserable state ; or if you be in it, O that I could awaken you, that you might speedily be brought out of it. Have you yet time of repentance ? And are your souls and bodies yet together ? Yet hath God’s patience kept you out of hell ? O harden not your hearts, lest time be gone, and death and darkness be upon you before you are aware. “ Behold, now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation,” saith the Holy Ghost<sup>a</sup>. Doth God give you warning once again before he smiteth you into everlasting vengeance, and doth he once more call you to repent before he summon you to judgment ? O take the counsel of the Holy Ghost ; “ To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts<sup>b</sup>.” I say, to-day, lest he bear not with thee till to-morrow, “ Boast not of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth<sup>c</sup>.” And if God do call thine impenitent soul out of this world before our next meeting in this place, or at least,

<sup>y</sup> Mark iii. 5.

<sup>z</sup> Acts ix. 9.

<sup>a</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 2.

<sup>b</sup> Heb. iii. 7, 8. 15. Psal. xcvi. 8.

<sup>c</sup> Prov. xxvii. 1.

ere long, remember then that thou hadst time to have prevented the misery which thou must feel to all eternity.

There is not a more fearful plague on earth than a hardened heart; none is more like to be sealed up to damnation than such an one. Dost thou hear of the greatness of thy sin, and hear of judgment and eternal life, and hear of the love and severity of the Lord, and yet dost thou not feel it? O sad case, and sadly to be lamented by all that understand it! For from thyself it cannot be expected. Believe it, sinner, God hath a voice that will be heard and regarded. If the voice of mercy be made light of, the voice of judgment shall not be made light of. When we have told thee of thy danger, and of the remedy by Christ, thou canst go home and cast it out of thy mind. But when God hath said, "Go ye cursed to everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," then make light of that if thou canst. When he hath newly said, "Take him and bind him hand and foot, and cast him into utter darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth;" then forget this, and cast this out of thy mind if thou canst. O poor wretch, if thou hadst to do but with such an one as I, or any one of the sons of men, perhaps thou mightest think to escape well enough: but thou hast to do with the eternal Majesty, and how then wilt thou escape? Canst thou grapple with his Almighty strength? Or canst thou make good thy part against him? When we call on thee to repent and reform, thou wilt not; when we call on thee to a holy and heavenly life, thou wilt not; but when he shall say, 'Depart from me, thou cursed wretch,' wilt thou then say, thou wilt not? When he shall deliver thee to the devils to be tormented by them for ever, who deceived thee in thy lifetime, and bid them take thee to everlasting flames, wilt thou then say, thou wilt not go? Alas, poor wretch! What power hast thou to resist? It is the same Almighty God that made all the world of nothing, and beareth it up in his hand, and disposeth of it at his will, which then will command thee to remediless perdition. If he bid the sun in the firmament move, it moveth; and once when he bad it stand still, it did stand still, and nothing is able to resist his power; and canst thou resist it? Why, if he send but a disease upon thee, thou art unable to resist it! If he bid thee die, wilt thou say, I will not die? Alas! If



sinner could have resisted God, and saved themselves from the stroke of justice, the church-yard would not have been so full of graves, nor hell so full of damned souls as it is at this day. "But who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered<sup>d</sup>?" Name me the man, and tell me where he dwells, that hardened his heart against the Lord, and sped well by it in the latter end? I tell you again, if sermons cannot make you feel; if mercies and warning, if threatening and affliction cannot make you feel, judgment and hell shall make you feel. Say not, but thou wast told so, and remember this when thou seest not me. Remember that I foretold thee that God will not be always jested with, or abused, and that thou canst not make so light of hell, as thou didst of the warnings of God and man. If thou be turned into a rock, God hath a hammer that can batter and dash in pieces that rock.

*Object.* 'But if God will harden my heart, how can I help it? It is he that hardened Pharaoh's heart, and so he did the Jews<sup>e</sup>. And if he will do it, what remedy?'

*Answ.* 1. Dost thou think to have any excuse or comfort by accusing the righteous and holy God? O what a foolish thing is sin, and how it bereaveth poor sinners of their understanding! Thou mightest better have laid the blame upon any one in the world, than upon the righteous and most holy God. For never sin came from him, nor was caused by him. Dost thou think he will not be justified in his judging? God's hardening men is but his leaving them to themselves, to go on in that hardness that he found them in, and denying them that grace which he no way oweth them. 2. And God doth not this neither, till thou abusest his grace, and strivest against the light, and castest away thy own mercy; and is it not just then that he should take his mercy from thee? If children will play with their meat, or cast it to the dogs, and tread it under feet, it is time to take it away. This is God's hardening of the hearts of sinners; he leaveth them as he found them, after they have abused and refused his grace. And withal, he letteth loose the tempter upon them, that seeing they will be wicked, they may be taken in their own wickedness, and destroy themselves by it; as you will lay a purse in the way to catch a

<sup>d</sup> Job ix. 4,

<sup>e</sup> Mark iv. 12.

thief by, when you do not make him thievish ; so God will try and catch a sinner when yet he never gives him any inclination to the sin. But when he seeth that they are and will be such, it is just with him to let them take their course, and smart by their folly. And as, if you see a thief that is running into a pit, you are not bound to keep him out ; no more is God to keep a sinner from destroying of himself, especially when he hath so often refused his assistance.

*Quest.* ‘ But what can I do for the softening of my own heart ?’

*Answ.* O that thou wert but willing to do what thou shouldst and mightest do. If thou be willing ; 1. Get alone and consider of the misery of thy condition ; and of the time when thou shalt feel whether thou wilt or no. 2. Keep under the most powerful preaching of the word, which is God’s ordinary means for the melting of the heart. 3. Keep in the company of those that will remember thee of those holy truths which have a softening nature, and will bring everlasting things into thy mind. 4. Keep out of the company of foolish and ungodly men, who by their words and practices will harden thee more. 5. Resolve that thou go not on in the practice of thy known sin ; no, not once more. For sinning against knowledge doth harden the heart, and tempt the Lord to leave thee to thyself. If thou wilt be drunk when thou knowest it to be a sin ; and wilt be worldly, and wilt be fleshly, when God and conscience speak against it ; this will desperately harden thy heart. 6. Beg daily of God that he would soften thy heart. Beseech him upon thy knees to pardon those sins by which thou hast hardened it, and to give thee his Spirit which must deliver thee from this misery : and follow him hard with these requests from day to day ; for if thou prevail not, thou art undone and lost for ever. For, saith the Holy Ghost, “ he that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but he that confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy. Happy is the man that feareth always, but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief<sup>f</sup>. ” “ He that being often reprov’d, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy<sup>g</sup>. ”

*Hindrance* 7. Another hindrance of conversion, is, The

<sup>f</sup> Prov. xxviii. 13, 14.

<sup>g</sup> Prov. xxix. 1.

too great esteem that men have of this world, and the great interest that it hath gotten in their hearts. By this it is that God is shut out, that Christ is so neglected, that heavenly things are so much undervalued ; because men have that in their hands already, or at least in their eyes, which they like better. God and mammon cannot be loved ; these two masters cannot be both served. While the world is leaned to, Christ will be made light of. The glory to come can never be obtained, but by the hearty forsaking of this present world. It is this that stole the heart from God ; and it is this that possesseth it, till grace recovereth it to God again : and therefore it is the work of grace to cast out the world, and to set up God ; to dethrone this usurper, and to give God again the possession of his own. As truly as darkness goeth out of the room when light comes in, so truly doth the love of the world depart where the love of God doth enter into the soul. For “ if any man (predominantly) love the world, the love of the Father is not in him <sup>h</sup>. ” Men cannot make God their end, and the world their end too. They cannot love God above all, and the world above all too. They cannot set their hearts on heaven, nor make it their treasure and their chiefest good, while they set their hearts on earth, and make it their treasure, “ For where their treasure is, their hearts will be <sup>i</sup>. ” When men are drowned in worldly cares, and taken up so much with worldly contrivances and businesses, there is then no room for the matters of their salvation. If they would go to consider of their sin and misery, and think of these things that might further their conversion, their worldly matters step in, and turn away their thoughts ; so that, when they are alone, and have opportunity for such considerations, yet they have no hearts to such a work. When they are considering, and begin to perceive that they must either change or perish, and that this life will not serve the turn, presently the world doth turn their minds, and telleth them of other matters to be minded, and so all is forgotten again. If their hearts be a little wakened and troubled for sin, the pleasure or business of the world doth quiet them, and while it maketh them forget their misery, they live as if it were cured, and all their trouble vanisheth away. If they are moved to set up the worship of God in

<sup>h</sup> 1 John ii. 15.<sup>i</sup> Matt. vi. 21.



their families, to read, and pray, and instruct those that are under them, the world will not give them leave, they have somewhat else to mind, which it seemeth they think of greater necessity. And thus the world is an enemy to God, and the love of it keepeth out the love of God, and the serving of it excludeth his service, and they that are friends of it, are certainly his enemies <sup>k</sup>." And this is a grievous hindrance of conversion.

*Direct. 7.* Let go the world then, if ever you would be converted. You renounced it in your baptism, see that your hearts now unfeignedly renounce it, unless you will renounce your part in Christ and the world to come. Think not to keep both, and make up a felicity to yourselves between them. It is now become your enemy, and as an enemy it must be affected and used, or else as an enemy it will effectually destroy you. It is a killing, conquering enemy, to those that take it not heartily for their enemy. But it is only a troubling, but a conquered enemy to them that take it and use it as an enemy. O that poor worldlings did but know what a feather, what a shadow, what an empty unprofitable thing they do pursue. You run after it eagerly, but when you overtake it, you will befool yourselves, and say, 'What have I gotten? Is this all that I have cared and toiled for? Is this all that I forsook God and my salvation for?' For your souls' sake, sinners, forsake not God till you know for what. Neglect not heaven till you have somewhat better to regard. Renounce not your salvation till you know such reason for it as you dare own, and stand to at death and judgment. Is a little plenty of wealth and worldly trifles a matter for a man to sell his soul for? You think, I know, that you do not sell your salvation for it, because you hope that you may have both: but this is but your wilful delusion. If you will not believe God now that telleth you you cannot have two portions, two treasures, two ends, or two masters, you will find it true when your deceit hath undone you. Doth God tell you that you cannot love both, and that the world and he cannot both have your hearts, and will you not believe him? If the world be better than God, then take it, and let him go. If it be more durable than heaven, then follow it and spare not. But,

<sup>k</sup> James iv. 8.

alas ! what a dream, what a shadow is it. How soon will it be gone ! Will you always dwell in these houses ? or will your friends and riches stay with you for ever ? Will you carry your lands and wealth, and fleshly provision to another world ? Alas, that men should wilfully undo themselves ! There is not a worldling, but will confess all this to be true that I say, and yet their hearts are still the same, and the world hath their love, and care, and pleasure, and worldlings they will be still. O what a self-condemning sinner is a worldling, and how much against his knowledge doth he sin ! He knows that he mis-placeth his affections, and yet he will do it. He foreseeth that the world will deceive him at the last, and yet he will follow it, to the neglect of his salvation. Christ hath made but “one thing necessary<sup>1</sup>.” Do that and do all : get that and get all. But they needlessly incumber themselves about many things, and make themselves more work than God hath made them ; and will not see that they have lost their labour, till they find that they have lost their souls. O poor foolish sinners, that now are so busy for you know not what, and rejoicing in your possessions as if you were happy, when “your souls shall be required of you, whose then shall these things be<sup>m</sup> ?” When death and judgment shall awaken you to your account, and help you better to understand your reckoning, then make your boast of the world, and boast of your gain, if you find it worth your boasting of. Then tell us who was the wiser merchant, he that sold all for the pearl of grace and glory, or he that let go that treasure for the world. Then tell us whether a heavenly or an earthly conversation was the wiser course ; and who it was that choose the better part.

*Hindrance* 8. Another great impediment to conversion, is, When custom in sinning hath given it the mastery, and made the flesh the ruler of your reason, and made men think that they have a kind of necessity to sin. Nature as corrupted, doth bring forth sin in too great strength ; but custom doth make it stronger, and blotteth out the remnants of moral wisdom and honesty from the soul. When men have long taken a custom of sinning, they grow hardened and senseless, as the high way doth by being often trod

<sup>1</sup> Luke x. 42.

<sup>m</sup> Luke xli. 10.

upon, or as a labourer's hand grows hard by constant labour. And so sin becometh familiar to them, and they become "past feeling," and are "given up to work uncleanness with greediness<sup>a</sup>." A custom of sinning against reason doth make men in a sort unreasonable, by giving their sensuality the rule of their reason. We see by sad experience, when men grow old in ignorance, how hardly they are brought to knowledge, yea, or to be willing to learn. And when men are often drunk, or commit any other heinous sin, how it prostituteth their souls to the next temptation, and maketh sin as familiar to them as water to the fish. It must be by a miracle, or next to a miracle, that an old, ignorant, worldly or sensual sinner must be converted. By often sinning they have lost their understandings, and hardened their hearts, and think the greatest good to be evil, and think they cannot live without their sin. But as a man in a fever calls for cold water, so do they for the pleasure of their flesh. They must have it, they cannot forbear it, their flesh will have no nay. "If the ~~blackmore~~ can change his skin, or the leopard his spots, then may they that are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well<sup>o</sup>." We see in public cases, what a power custom hath. If men be but used to any thing in God's worship, that is unmeet or contrary to the word of God, they will not hearken to the Scripture, but cry out, 'Custom, custom,' against that plain word that must judge them, and should direct them; as if the custom of their forefathers were of more authority than the word of God. No wonder then if a custom of swearing, or drunkenness, or worldliness, or wickedness, or contempt of a religious, godly life, do prevail with thousands to harden them to perdition; and this be a grievous hindrance to their conversion.

*Direct.* 8. You that are yet young, take heed of a custom in sin, and you that are hardened in it already, in the fear of God make a stand and go no further. It is sad that you have gone so far. But if you wilfully go on but one day more, you know not but God may leave you to yourselves; and if you wilfully add but one sin more to the heap, it may seal you to perdition, it may break your backs, and sink you into hell. O what a folly is it then for men to delay their repentance to the last, when custom in sinning doth make

<sup>a</sup> Eph. iv. 19, 20.

<sup>o</sup> Jer. xiii. 23.



the work of their conversion to be more difficult. Remember, I beseech you, that your custom is the aggravation of your sin, and not any just excuse. What! if you had taken a custom of spitting in the face of your own father or dearest friend, or any way abusing him, would you think it good excuse for you to continue it, because you are accustomed to it? Why, the oftener you have sinned, the oftener you have wronged God; and the oftener you have wronged him, the more should you now bewail it, and not therefore go on to wrong him more. If you had oftentimes hurt yourselves by falls, or cut your fingers by negligence or carelessness, will you do so still to keep a custom? What greater madness can there be than to plead custom for sinning against the living God, and hastening your own souls to everlasting perdition? You shall have custom for suffering then, as you have for sinning now, and see whether you will therefore love your suffering. If you will love sin, because you are accustomed to it, you shall try whether you can love hell, because you are accustomed to it.

*Hindrance 9.* Another hindrance of conversion, is, Foolish self-love, that makes men unwilling to know the worst of themselves, and so keepeth them from believing their sinfulness and misery; and causeth them to presume and keep up false deceiving hopes, that they may be saved whether they are converted or not; or that they are converted, when indeed they are not. They think it is every one's duty to hope well of themselves, and therefore they will do so; and so while they hope they are converted already, or may be saved without conversion, no wonder if they look not seriously after it. Like many a sick man that I have known in the beginning of a consumption, or some grievous disease, they hope there is no danger in it; or they hope it will go away of itself, and it is but some cold; or they hope that such or such an easy medicine may cure it, till they are past hope, and then they must give up these hopes, and their lives together, whether they will or no. Just so do poor wretches by their souls. They know that all is not well with them, but they hope God is so merciful, that he will not damn them, or they hope to be converted sometime hereafter, or they hope that less ado may serve turn, and that their good wishes and prayers may save their souls, and

that in these hopes they hold on, till they find themselves to be past remedy, and their hopes and they be dead together. I speak not this without the Scripture; Prov. xi. 17. "When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish, and the hope of the unjust man perisheth." Job xxvii. 8, 9. "What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he have gained, when God taketh away his soul? Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him?" Job xi. 20. "And the eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape; and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost." There is scarce a greater hindrance of conversion, than these false, deceiving hopes of sinners; that think they are converted when they are not; or hope to be saved, when they have no ground for their hopes. Were it not for this, men would look about them and return.

*Direct.* 9. I have formerly spoke and wrote to you of this point, and I have told you that it is none of my desire that any man should despair. But despair you must of ever being saved without conversion, or finding heaven in the way to hell. Till that kind of despair possess your hearts, we cannot expect a saving change. For men will not let go all their pleasure, and cast themselves upon these difficulties, which flesh and blood apprehendeth to be in the way of God, as long as they hope to do well enough without it. No wonder if men be unholy, that hope to be saved, whether they be holy or not. It is hope that keepeth your hearts from breaking, which must be broken for your former sins. It is hope of doing well enough in your present case, that keeps you from seeking out for a better: if you knew that you must be converted or condemned, and had no hopes of being saved, unless you were born again, then you would look about you, and run to God by prayer for his grace, and run to the word by reading for instruction, and run to the minister with inquiry for direction, and be glad of that company which would help you to heaven. I tell you, it is these carnal hopes that deceive the world, and hinder them from seeking Christ and life. The thing, therefore, that I request of you for the sake of your own souls, is but this, That you would but try your hopes by the word of God, and prove them sound before you trust them; and content not yourselves to say, I hope I shall be saved, but prove and try,

whether you are such as God hath promised salvation to, or not: for there are hopes that will never deceive men; that is, those that are well grounded on the word of God: and there are hopes, as you have heard, that will die with men, and undo them; that is, those that had no ground but their own self-love; when men hope they shall be saved, because they would have it so, and hope to come to heaven, when they will not go the way to heaven. Is it not one of the dreadfulest sights in the world, to see a man ready to leave this world, and have no hopes but what will die when he dieth? O, if you did but know what a terrible thing it will be for a man in his lifetime to hope for salvation, and as soon as he is dead to find himself in damnation, and all his hopes to vanish like a dream, you would sure be persuaded to try your hopes. Prove once by the marks of grace in your souls, that thou art one of those that God hath promised salvation to; that is, one of the regenerate, the heavenly, and the holy, and then hope for salvation and spare not, and the Lord confirm and maintain thy hopes. For these hopes are grounded on the word of God, which never yet deceived any. But if you hope well, and know not why, and you have nothing to shew for your hopes of heaven, but what an ungodly man can shew, or the most of the world may shew that shall perish, and cannot prove that you are new creatures, and holy, and heavenly, these hopes do but hinder your conversion and salvation.

*Hindrance 10.* The next hindrance of conversion, is, Those counterfeit graces, or half-conversion, which are like to true graces, but are not them, and so do not bring over the soul to God, but strengthen the false hopes, which we mentioned before. There is somewhat in the heart of an unconverted man, which is like in his eyes to true conversion. Some fears and accusation of conscience he may have, and some change thereupon: he may be convinced of his sin and misery, and see the necessity of another course, and hereupon may change his company, and betake himself to many duties, and break off many of his former sins, and seem to himself to be truly converted, and glory in this as long as he liveth, and think verily that he is indeed a converted man. He may know the very time, the book, the sermon, the words that were the means of doing this work upon his



soul, and therefore think that it is truly done. He may remember so great change that was made on him, that he may confidently conclude that it was a saving change, and yet it may be but common preparation, or mere terrors or convictions, or some common works, which many that perish, partake of. He may have hereupon somewhat that in his eye is like to every grace of the Spirit, and therefore think that these are they indeed ; and this is a fearful, deceiving state, and mightily quieteth men in a miserable condition ; when these common gifts should be otherwise used.

*Direct.* 10. Take heed, therefore, of trusting to counterfeit graces, or superficial works that do not effectually convert the soul. Labour to discern by the light of the word of God, whether the work be savingly done or not ; how you may discern it, I have told you before. If God be set up highest in your souls, and brought nearest to your hearts, and your hopes are set upon the life to come, and all things in this world seem vain to you in comparison of it ; if sin be bitter to you, and Christ, and grace, and holiness be sweet, then you may conclude that it is a saving work, but otherwise not. And therefore rest not in common works.

*Hindrance* 11. Another hindrance, is, When men live among strong temptations, and occasions of sin ; as when they depend upon some great men, or parents, or other friends that are enemies to godliness, and would undo them if they should follow it ; or when they are so engaged in a course of sin, that they cannot break it off without their worldly undoing or suffering ; when their credit or their gain depends upon it. As the oppressor liveth by oppression, and the ale-seller liveth by the sins of drunkards, or tippling, idle companions, and because they think this gain is sweet, therefore they will not leave the sin. As Acts xix. 24, 25. because Demetrius and the rest of the craftsmen had their wealth and living by making shrines for the idol Diana, therefore they stirred up the people against the Gospel and the preachers of it, that would take down the idol that caused their commodity. In like manner, when men that are addicted to drunkenness will live among such company, or temptations, as will draw them to it : when lustful persons will live among those that do provoke or tempt them : when ignorant, unresolved persons live among those that

speaking ill of godliness, it is a hard thing to be converted under these temptations; especially if men wilfully cast themselves upon them.

*Direct.* 11. Fly therefore the occasions and appearances of evil. If you would not be drowned, what do you so near the water-side? If you would not be wounded, why do you thrust yourselves among your enemies? If you would escape the hook, meddle not with the bait: walk not among the lime-twigs if you would not be entangled. You may fly from temptation, and yet resist the devil, and make him fly. Be not too confident of your own strength; consider whether it be safe to die in your sin and ungodliness? If not, why should you live in it? And if you may not live in it, why should you commit it? If you cannot digest it when it is down, but it must up again by repentance, or you perish, why then should you let it down? If you may not let it down, what reason have you to be tasting it? And if you may not take it, why should you once look upon it, to entice your taste? And if you may not look on, why should you think on it, and make your own fancy to be your tempter. Present and strong temptations have shaken those that seemed to be cedars; therefore take heed of them; for they may much more hinder the conversion of the impenitent, and such difficulties may easily block up the way of life to you.

*Hindrance* 12. Another common hindrance of conversion, is, The scandalous lives of the professors of religion; when those that seem godly, or indeed are so, shall fall into division among themselves, and withdraw from each other, and censure one another, and cry out against one another as deceived; when the common people see so many religions, as they think, and so many several minds and ways, they think it is as good to be of none, as to venture among so many, where they are not sure to hit on the right; and it maketh them question all, when they see so many that they know not which to own. When they see men change their opinions, which awhile ago they seemed so zealous for, this makes them think that the rest may be as uncertain as these. And thus we have seen by sad experience in these times, that many have been kept off from the approving, and practice of a godly life, because of the unhappy differences that are among us. And, alas! when they see one that seemed

religious to be worldly, and another to fall into this or that sin, this makes them think that religion is but hypocrisy, and themselves are already in as good a condition as the godly are.

*Direct.* 12. I will not excuse the sins of any. Offence must come, but woe to him by whom it comes. If they be godly, their profession doth aggravate it, and therefore I do not intend to extenuate it. But yet, as I must needs say, that the malice of the ungodly doth frequently make even holiness to be a crime, and virtue itself to be the greatest vice, and those to be faults that are really none, and those to be common that are seldom, and but the case of very few; and those to be great that are not so. So I must needs tell you, that there is no sufficient reason in the faults, and divisions of those that are religious to dissuade any from religion, or excuse them in their sin, or sinful neglect of their own salvation, For consider these things following.

(1.) It is not men's lives that are any disgrace to the word of God, any more than it is a dishonour to the sun that some men are blind, or others wilfully abuse his light. Will you fall a railing at the sun, because a thief may steal by the light of it, or a murderer may kill men by the light of it? or some men may miss their way? This is not long of it, but of themselves. (2.) Yea, consider that it is for want of being more religious that men are so bad, and not because they are religious. Can you prove that ever religion did teach men to be bad? Doth the word of God teach men to be worldly, to be proud, to divide the church, and abuse one another? You know it doth not: nay, you know that it forbiddeth and condemneth all this; and that no one in the world hath said and done so much against these sins as God hath done. And no religion is so much against them as the Christian religion. And is it not an abuse beyond all modesty then, to think ill of the word of God, or of his way, because men offend against it, and forsake it? To accuse the law, because men break it? To wrong God because others have wronged him? (3.) Consider, that the sins of others will be no excuse to you. Their fall should be your warnings, and not your hardening. Will God pardon or save without repentance and faith, because some that seemed religious have miscarried? If they are wicked while



they seem religious, they and you, if you so continue, shall be damned together. But if they rise by repentance, and hate and forsake the sins which they did fall into, and you stumble upon them, and will not rise with them, but quarrel with religion, because of their falls, they shall be pardoned, and you shall perish. I tell thee, man, if all the world should fall from God, he will not therefore change his law, nor admit one unconverted sinner into heaven. Do you think to be saved without holiness, because some men counterfeit holiness that have it not? Methinks this should cast you into greater terrors, and make you think with yourselves how much you have yet to do, that must go further, and be better than any hypocrite was, before you can have any durable hopes of salvation. If you will have any part in God, you must stick to him, though all men else should forsake him, and not forsake him, because you think that others do so that seemed to stick to him. (4.) Consider also, that as to the divisions that offend you, it is not every difference in judgment or practice that makes a new religion. While we are here we shall know but in part, and therefore shall differ in part, but as long as we all agree in the fundamentals, and live to God, we are of one religion, for all our differences. (5.) And can you think that it will excuse you to be of no religion, because that other men are of a wrong religion? Will you sit still and let heaven go, because some men have missed the way to it? Do you think that this is a reasonable conclusion? Surely they that would fain know the way if they could, and are diligent to seek it, are likelier to be accepted, though they fall into many errors, than those that mind it not, but prefer the things of the world before it. (6.) The more bye ways there be, the more need have you to look about you, and see that you miss not the way yourselves. Salvation is not a matter that we can spare, and therefore the difficulty must make us more diligent, and not more negligent. 7. Among all the religions and opinions in the world, God hath not left you at a loss, he hath given you his word to tell you which is the right, and many means to understand it. So that if proud and careless men will err, it followeth not that therefore the humble and diligent may not be certain, which way is the right. Go you to the Scripture with an humble reverence, willing to know

the will of God, that you may do it, and take the helps that you may have from ministers and private Christians, and shew not by your neglect that you despise the word of God, and your salvation, and then you shall have no cause to complain that you cannot find the right religion, and not hit the way to heaven, because there are so many opinions. (8.) I pray you consider of that which I have often answered you to this objection. Will you but faithfully practise that which all, or almost all these different parties are agreed in? If not, then make not their differences any more a pretence for your ungodliness. If you will, then consider, whether they be not all agreed of the necessity of conversion and a holy life. Will they not all acknowledge that there is no salvation without sanctification and newness of life? Let their agreement then move you, and do not for shame neglect so great and necessary a thing, which is owned by them all, who differ much in other things.

*Hindrance* 13. The next hindrance of conversion, is, The ill education of children: when they are trained up in ignorance, or kept unacquainted with the truths of God till they are grown hardened in their evil way; especially when they are taught from their childhood to think hardly of godliness, and speak reproachfully of it, and hear nothing of the godly, but by slander or contempt. That which people receive in their youth, doth usually possess them all their days: they receive it with more advantage, when they are most teachable and tractable: and when they receive it from parents, and those that have the greatest interest in their affections, and the most absolute rule over them. And therefore we see that most of the world are such as they were taught in their childhood to be: and it is hard to change them from the way that they were brought up in.

*Direct.* 13. O, you that have children, remember they are Christ's. (1.) If you are Christians, both you and yours are devoted to God: will you be so forward to devote them to God in baptism, and will you rob him afterwards of his own; and break these covenants, and, contrary to your own promises, will you hinder them from the knowledge and fear of God? O what desperate hypocrisy and wickedness is this? Will you come here in the face of the congregation, and consecrate and offer your children to Christ, and when

you have done, will you keep them from the way of Christ, and make them believe that godliness is more ado than needs, and that holiness is but foolish preciseness? Will you here undertake to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and when you have done, never once instruct them in his fear, nor persuade them to a holy life, nor restrain them from sin, but rather teach them to rail, and curse, and swear, and be carnal? O cruel wretches that dare thus murder your children's souls! To murder the body is an heinous sin, yea, though it were the body of an enemy; but to murder the soul, yea, and the soul of a child, and so to be guilty of their eternal damnation; what greater sin can you commit? O what a horror it will be to you to see your own children in eternal flames by your procurement; and to hear them there cry out against you, and say, you hardened them in evil, you discouraged them from good. You gave them ill examples, you used to rail, curse and swear before them: you took no pains to convince them of their natural sin and misery; and to get them to Christ that they might be healed by him. O pity your poor children, and do not hinder them from that glory that is offered them: if the devil be against their salvation, be not you so too. It is more excusable in the devil himself to seek to destroy the souls of your children, than it is in their own parents to do it: for nature and Christianity doth bind them to do otherwise. If you settle them in an ignorant, carnal course, they will remember it as long as they live; and if you possess them with hard thoughts of the holy ways of God, they will make this an argument against us, whenever we would seek to reform and convert them. Do we not hear it from them daily? Our fathers, say they, taught us otherwise, and we hope they are saved, and therefore we will venture to do as they did: so that it is the false conceits that you put into their minds in childhood, which ministers have to encounter with all their days after. The devil hath instruments enough to seek your children's damnation besides you: be not you his instruments as ever you would not lie with them in everlasting misery; take some more pity on yourselves and them. You could not find in your hearts to dash your children against the stones, or cut their throats, and if you should, the world would ring of



your wickedness, and the law of the land would deservedly put you to a painful death; and will you do them a greater mischief? Will you blind them, and keep them off from Christ and godliness? And will you embolden them in the way of sin, and help them to damnation? God forbid. But alas! they that have no more pity on their own souls, but to use them thus, what wonder if they have no more pity of others.

(2.) The next part of my Direction, therefore, is to you that have been brought up in ignorance and ungodliness from your youth. O look about you while you have time and means. If your parents have been false to you, be not false to God and your souls. If your parents have betrayed your souls, do not you betray your own. They kept you in ignorance because they were ignorant themselves; they bred you up in worldliness and ungodliness, because they were worldly and ungodly themselves; they spoke against holiness, because they knew it not, but were themselves unholy: but you have one that hath more interest in you than your parents, that calls to you for your conversion. Hearken to him if all the world should gainsay it: do not care as little for your own souls as your parents cared for them: do not take on you, even to love your parents so well as to follow them to damnation; their company will not make hell any easier to you. Should not the love of your heavenly Father do more to draw you to heaven, than the love of your parents to draw you to hell? O hearken then to God and to his word, though all the world should say against it.

*Hindrance* 14. Another hindrance of conversion, is, Striving against the Spirit of grace. When God would illuminate a sinner, and he is unwilling to see, when God would take off a sinner from his lusts and evil ways, and he is loath to be taken off; God sheweth him his sin to humble him, and he is unwilling to be humbled, but striveth against the Spirit, and runneth into worldly businesses, or merry company, or turneth his thoughts to other things. As Christ said to the Jews, "How oft would I have gathered you, but you would not P;" so he may say to many a sinner, How oft did I shew thee a better way, and thou wouldst not walk in it; how oft did I shew thee the sinfulness and misery of thy

estate, and thou wouldst not come off from it. When men fight against Christ, and purposely wink because they hate the light that would reform them, and when they strive against the Spirit that would convert them, what wonder if they be unconverted!

*Direct.* 14. If ever you would be converted, yield to the Spirit of God that would convert you. It is his office to sanctify all that shall be saved: be not you unwilling to be sanctified by him. If you refuse help when it is offered you, you may justly be left helpless and perish for want of that which you did despise. You are baptized into the name of the Holy Ghost, by which you have professed to take him for your Sanctifier, and are you now unwilling to be sanctified by him? And will you now strive against him when you are so solemnly engaged to him? You cannot be saved unless you be sanctified, and you cannot be sanctified unless it be done by the Holy Ghost, whom you now resist. O how easily and prosperously doth the work go on, when the Spirit of God assisteth, and how impossible is it to be done without him! They that would have a prosperous voyage will take wind and tide, and not be so foolish as to set against them when they stand to their advantage: he that would have health will not abuse the physician, and drive him away from him. O take heed how you use the Spirit of God if ever you would be converted!

*Hindrance* 15. Another hindrance of conversion, is, Unresolvedness and half-purposes; when men will hang wavering between God and the world; and though the light be never so clear to convince them, yet they will not be persuaded to resolve. "A double-minded man," saith James, "is unstable in all his ways<sup>9</sup>." O how many shall perish for want of resolution! They have been convinced that they must be changed or else they are undone, and yet they would not resolve: they have long been inclining to a better course, and had some thoughts of it, but the world hindereth, or friends hinder, or the flesh hindereth, and they will not resolve; and thus they hang loose from God, and never unfeignedly resign up themselves to him, till either God in judgment leave them to themselves, or death and hell do find them unresolved.

<sup>9</sup> James i. 8.

*Direct.* 15. If you would be converted and saved, do not stand wavering, but resolve, and presently turn to God. If it were a doubtful business, I would not persuade you to do it rashly, or if there were any danger to your souls in resolving, then I would say no more. But when it is a case that should be beyond all dispute with men of reason, why should you stand staggering, as if it were a doubtful case? What a horrible shame is it to be unresolved whether God or the world should have your hearts? Were it not a disgrace to that man's understanding that were unresolved whether gold or dung were better? or whether a bed of thorns, or a feather-bed were the easier? or whether the sun or a clod of earth were the more light and glorious? It is a far greater shame for a man to be unresolved, whether it be God or the world that must make him happy, and that should have his heart, and whether a life of sin or holiness be the better. What! have you read Scripture, and heard sermons so long, and yet are you unresolved of this? Nay, have you common reason, and do you believe that there is a God, and a world to come, and yet are you unresolved whether you must be godly or not? I say to you, as Elias did to Israel, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If God be God follow him, if Baal be God follow him<sup>r</sup>." If it be better to be damned than leave your sins, then keep them, and the curse of God with them. But if it be better to deny your flesh, than to suffer everlastingly the wrath of God, then away with your iniquities, and meddle with them no more; if it be better to live in an alehouse awhile, than in heaven for ever, then drink on and spare not; but if it be not, why do you not consider and come away. If God and godliness be not better than the world and wickedness, then take your course; but if they be, why do you stand wavering, and do not resolve to be the people of God with all your hearts? O what a blind and miserable creature is a wicked man, that such matters as these should seem doubtful to him! or that he should yet be unresolved of them! What, unresolved whether it be best to go to heaven, or not! and whether it be best to be damned, or not! And all this for the love of a stinking unprofitable lust! If this be wisdom, what then is folly?

<sup>r</sup> 1 Kings xviii. 21.



*Hindrance* 16. Another hindrance of conversion, is, Delay. When men are resolved that they must be converted or condemned, and purpose to let go sin, and to take another course, yet they delay and put off the time. They would yet have a little more of the pleasure of their sin before they part with it. Yet they cannot spare it, but shortly they will do it. They are yet young, and they hope they have daylight, and time enough before them. They are yet in health, and therefore they hope there is no such haste, but they may have time to think on it. Because God will receive a sinner whensoever he returneth, they think they may stay a little longer. And thus some grow hardened by custom in their sin, and others are cut off while they are purposing to return; and many thousand souls are lost for ever that once were purposed to have turned to God, and all because they delayed their return; as the sluggard saith, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber<sup>s</sup>;" so saith the sinner, yet I may sin a little while, till they have sinned themselves into a reprobate sense, or provoked God to leave them to themselves, and so they must perish everlastingly by their delay.

*Direct.* 16. O consider, therefore, sinners, that conversion is not a work to be delayed. Would a man lie under the wrath and curse of God one day, that knew what it is? Methinks he should not. Are you loath to come out of the bondage of the devil? Why, your delay doth shew that your heart is false, and that you be not willing truly to be converted. He that is loath to leave his sin this day or hour, would never leave it, if he knew how to keep it: if he did not love it, he would be willing to be rid of it without delay. He that loveth God, had rather return and be reconciled to him, and partake of the joy of his Spirit to-day, than to-morrow. Did you but know what God is, you would not delay your conversion to him. Did you but know what the glory is that he offereth you, you would not delay to make sure of it any longer. Did you but see the nature of sin, and know the miserable effects of it, O how hastily would you endeavour to be rid of it! If you had so many serpents or toads in your bosoms, you would not say, I will cast them out to-morrow, but how quickly would you shake them from you? If you

<sup>s</sup> Prov. vi. 10. xxiv. 33.

had but felt the sting of sin, it would appear another matter to you than now it doth. It is one kind of face that sin hath in an alehouse, or in the height of your filthy lust, or in the seeming gain of your covetous practices; and it is another kind of face that it hath when God will reckon for it with the guilty soul. Should a man trifle in such a course, wherein, if he die, he is lost for ever? Why, poor, wretched sinner, how long wilt thou delay? And why wilt thou delay? Wilt thou delay till death shall seize upon thee, and thou drop into hell before thou art aware? Dost thou not know that sin gets advantage by thy delay? God hath not promised thee that ever his Spirit shall be offered to thee more; if thou refuse his assistance, and delay thy conversion but one day longer. And woe be to thee if he depart from thee<sup>1</sup>! When people will have none of God, nor will hearken to his voice, he often giveth them up to their own heart's lusts, to walk in their own counsels<sup>2</sup>. O unworthy wretch! if thou hadst any of the ingenuity of a Christian within thy breast, thou wouldst say, 'I have abused Christ and his grace so long, that I am utterly ashamed of it, and will abuse him no more; I have too long slighted Christ already, and too long hearkened to his enemy's voice. If thy dead heart were but well awakened to consider and feel thy own condition, thou wouldst be quickly affrighted out of thy delay, and run as hastily from thy state of sin, as thou wouldst out of a house that were all on fire over thy head, or out of a boat that were sinking under thee. What, hast thou not yet served the devil long enough? Hast thou not yet sufficiently abused Christ, not oft enough rejected the grace of God? Hast thou not yet wallowed long enough in the filth of sin? But must thou needs have more of it? Hast thou not yet done enough to the destruction of thy soul? Nor drunk in enough of that deadly poison, nor stabbed thyself sufficiently by thy wickedness, but thou must needs have more? Will sin come up easier, when it is deeper rooted? And canst thou more easily be converted, when thou hast driven away the Spirit of God that should convert thee? Wilt thou travel out of thy way till night, before thou wilt turn back again? And wilt thou drive the nail yet faster to the head, which thou knowest must be drawn out again? O be not wilfully

<sup>1</sup> Hos. ix. 12. Jer. vi. 8.<sup>2</sup> Psal. lxxxi. 11. 12.

befooled by sin. Wilt thou be converted, or wilt thou not? If not, thou art a lost man. If thou know thou must, why not to-day rather than to-morrow? What reason have you for any longer delay? Is a state of sin, or a state of grace better? If sin be better, keep it, and make the best of it: but if grace, and holiness, and happiness be better, why then should you delay? If you were sick you would not care how soon you were well: and if you had a bone broken, you care not how soon it were set; and when your souls are in a state of sin and misery, are you afraid of being safe and happy too soon? Remember another day, that a day, and many a day of grace thou hadst; and if thou lose this day, thou mayst thank thyself, if thou lose thy soul, and if thou never have another day like this. "To-day, whilst it is called to-day, therefore, hear his voice, and harden not your hearts \*." When David thought of his ways, he made haste and delayed not to turn to God, and keep his precepts, Psal. cxix. 60. as was aforesaid.

*Hindrance* 17. Another great hindrance of conversion, is, When good beginnings are not followed on, but suffered to die and come to nothing before they bring men over to God. Commonly preparing works of grace go before thorough sanctifying works; and men have many convictions, and half-reformations, and troubles of mind, before they come to close with Christ upon the terms that he is offered. These common preparatory works are the way to more: if men would but cherish these, and follow them on, and improve the light and motions which they have, they know not what a blessed issue they might see: but when they will forget the truth that once did move them, and lose the purposes that once they had, and turn back again to the sins they were in before; no wonder if these be left in their iniquities. Is not this the case of you that hear me this day? You have been convinced that God and your souls must be regarded, whatsoever else be neglected; and did you not thereupon begin to pray, and to use means, and take the helps in public and private that are necessary for your salvation? And have not some of you fallen into company that have taken you off by foolish cavils or vain objections, and evil examples, and enticing you to sin? And have not

\* Heb. iii. 7, 8.



others of you grown cold, and lost your feeling, as if you were not the same men, and had never heard or felt such things? And others of you turned to this present world, and choked the word with the cares of this life? And so the hopeful beginnings that you once had, are turned to a relapse into your old condition.

*Direct.* 17. If there be any such sinners that hear me this day, (as I fear there be too many,) consider whence you are fallen, and be zealous and amend<sup>y</sup>. Are you turned with “the dog to his vomit, and with the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire<sup>z</sup>?” What! Do you “look back when you had put your hand to the plough of God<sup>a</sup>?” Did Christ give you any cause to repent of his service, or to forsake him? Have you found indeed that the devil is the better master, and that the way of sin is the better way, and the wages of sin the better wages? What! did the thoughts of everlasting life once move you, and will they not move you now? Is heaven become as no heaven to you, and God as no God, and Christ as no Christ, and the promises as no promises? And are you grown abler to resist the terrors of the Lord? O poor souls, that you did but know the misery of apostates! The Lord hath professed, that “if any draw back, his soul shall have no pleasure in him<sup>b</sup>.” And they that draw back, shall find they do it to their own perdition; when they should have “believed and persevered to the saving of their souls<sup>c</sup>.” There are none of all the damned more miserable than they that were sometimes fair for heaven, and did once begin to look after godliness; for the “latter end of these men is worse than their beginning<sup>d</sup>.” Alas! how sad will it be to see the faces of such among the wicked and condemned at the last, and to think that once we saw the faces of these men among the godly, and once they seemed to set themselves for heaven, and are they fallen off to this! And is this the end of them? In the name of God, sirs, I warn and charge every one of you that ever had a thought of returning to God, and giving up yourselves to a holy life, that you presently bethink you, what is gone with these thoughts and purposes, and why did you turn from these beginnings? What reason had you for it? And what

<sup>y</sup> Rev. iii. 19.

<sup>b</sup> Heb. x. 38.

<sup>z</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 22.

<sup>c</sup> Ver. 39.

<sup>a</sup> Luke ix. 62.

<sup>d</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21.

cause hath Christ given you? What! will the world now be a faster friend to you than before? And will you now continue with it, and never die? Or can you better be without God and his grace than before? O be awakened from this desperate folly, and once again renew your former resolutions, and consider whether you are not nearer eternity than you were; and have not as much need of Christ as ever? And sleep not on till hell awake you.

*Hindrance* 18. The next hindrance of conversion to be mentioned, is, A misunderstanding of Scripture, and erroneous thoughts of the ways of God. If error possess the mind, it will keep out grace from possessing the heart, so far as the error prevaieth. I shall instance in some few particulars.

(1.) Some men know not what true grace or conversion is, and therefore think they have it when they have none, and do not set themselves to look after it. They think that it is but to forsake some gross sins, and to use some outward service of God, and do no one any wrong, and then they think they have true conversion; because they have turned from many sins that once they lived in. But these must know, that conversion is the withdrawing of the soul from the world, and from carnal self, and the devoting of ourselves, and all that we have to God. If you should be never so zealous in forms, and take up never so strict principles, and stick to the strictest party; this is no proof of true conversion, if your souls do not cleave to God, as your portion, and to Christ as the only way to God.

(2.) Some there be that do not think there is any such thing as saving grace, or true conversion in the world; because they have none themselves, they do not think that any one else hath. When they hear of a hope and heart in heaven, and of loving God above all creatures, they do not think that any one doth reach to it, but that men merely talk of such things, which they never had experience of. But these men must know, that it is an arrogant madness to contradict the scope of the word of God, and the common experience of the best men in the world; and all because they are so bad themselves. Doth God talk so much of sanctifying his people, and putting the Spirit of Jesus into their hearts, and ruling them, and dwelling in them, and crucify-

ing the world to them, and “purifying a peculiar people to himself, that are zealous of good works<sup>e</sup>; and now dare they say there is no such thing? Whether is God or they to be believed? What! hath Christ died to procure it, and is it the office of the Holy Ghost to work it, and now is there no such thing? Are the word, and ministers, and all the ordinances to that end, and now is there no such thing? God will make them know that such a thing was offered once to them, and such a thing as grace and a heavenly life were necessary to their salvation. And if they will not believe the experience of the saints, nor will see the graces of God, as they shine in the conversation of his people, they shall be forced one day to see, and be ashamed.

(3.) Others there be that think holiness is but needless preciseness; and that to meditate on God and heaven, and make it our main business, is but more ado than needs; and that this is but to be godly overmuch, and God will accept less; and this is the way even to drive men beside themselves.

*Answ.* Though I have formerly answered this objection, yet because it here again falls in my way, I shall distinctly answer it in these particulars.

*Quest. 1.* Tell me truly, do you think that God or you are fitter to be judges of what is necessary to the salvation of a sinner? Doth God command it? and dare you say it is more ado than needs? Why, what is this, but plainly to say, that God hath set us upon a needless work? Yea, what is it but to say, you are wiser than he? There is no master so foolish and unmerciful, as will set his servant to pick straws, and labour to no purpose: and will you impute such unmerciful folly to God? Dare you say he makes you more ado than needs?

*Quest. 2.* And then I ask, Is it more ado than Scripture doth require? Doth not the word of God make it necessary, which you call unnecessary? Read and judge.—“Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness<sup>f</sup>.” “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force<sup>g</sup>.” “Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, shall

<sup>e</sup> Tit. ii. 14.

<sup>f</sup> Matt. vi. 19, 20, 23.

<sup>g</sup> Matt. xi. 12.



seek to enter in, and shall not be able<sup>h</sup>." "Labour not for the food which perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life<sup>i</sup>." "See then that ye walk circumspectly, redeeming the time<sup>k</sup>." "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness<sup>l</sup>?" And an hundred more such places may be mentioned. So that if it be an error to require so much ado for our salvation, it is God himself that is the cause of it. And who is most likely to be in the right? The Lord that made you, or such silly, ignorant worms as you? You scarce know good from bad; and will you take on you to be wiser than God, and to control his law?

*Quest. 3.* Do you think indeed in your consciences, that a man can do too much for heaven, (as long as he doth but what God bids him,) and that he can be at more cost and labour for it, than it is worth? Is that man worthy or meet to see the face of God in glory, that thinks it not worth his utmost diligence? Do you set so much by your labour, or do you set so light by God and glory, as to think the everlasting enjoyment of it to be unworthy of your pains?

*Quest. 4.* Do you think there ever was a man that got well to heaven, that repented of coming thither at so dear a rate; or that was there of your mind, that this godliness is more ado than needs? If we could but speak with one of the glorified saints that see the face of God, and put the case to him, which is the wiser man, he that doth all that he can to be saved, or he that saith what needs all this ado? which side do you think he would be on? Cannot you easily conjecture?

*Quest. 5.* Is Christ, or the apostles, or any of the servants of God of your mind? Judge by their conversations whether they thought it more ado than needs. The best of his saints never had so much grace but they longed for more; they never were so holy, but they longed to be better; and do you think that you are wiser than all they, and that neither prophets, apostles, nor any saints of God did know what they did?

*Quest. 6.* What is it that you think is so painful a life as to be too much for God and heaven? Do you know what you talk of? Why, it is the only joyful life on earth. It is

<sup>h</sup> Luke xiii. 24.<sup>i</sup> John vi. 27.<sup>k</sup> Eph. v. 15.<sup>l</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 11.

more a receiving from God, than a giving to him. It is an employment that is suited both to the new nature of the saints, and to their necessity and good. What is holiness but a living in the love of God and joy of the Holy Ghost, and hope of the life to come, and a daily communion with God in the Spirit, in the use of his holy ordinances? To hear of his love, and the promise of his glory, and the pardon of our sins, and to beg of him what we want, and thank and praise him for what we have received? And do you think this is so tedious a life? Is it a toil to you to eat and drink of the best, when your bodies do require it? Or to rest when you are weary? Or to love your dearest friend, and to be in his company? If not, why should we think it a toil to live in the love of God, and in holy communion with him in his service?

*Quest. 7.* And is it not a certain mark of a graceless heart to think that this is such a grievous work? Sure that soul is void of the love of God, that thinks it a grievous thing to love him. A man that hates his wife, and loveth harlots, will say, 'I cannot love her, nor abide to dwell with her;' but if he loved her he would think otherwise. If you did not hate God you would not think it so grievous to live in the love of him, and to be much in his holy worship.

*Quest. 8.* Do you desire to come to heaven, or not? If not, then remember, if you are shut out, it is by your own consent. If you would come thither, then do you not know that all your employment there must be such as this, and much more holy and perfect than this? Will you account heaven itself grievous? And the praises of God there, to be more ado than needs? If not, how dare you say so of a far lower degree which we have in this life? If you are weary of this little, how weary would you be of heaven?

*Quest. 9.* I pray you tell me, do you think indeed that any man on earth is as good as he should be? Do you not know, that he that is best is too bad; and he that doth most comes unspeakably too short of what he should do? And dare you say then, that this is more ado than needs? Why if you had spoken to Peter or Paul, or the holiest man that ever lived, he would have rather complained that he could be no better, and cried out, 'O that I were more holy, and could be more taken up in the love of God, alas! I fall ex-

ceedingly short of what is my duty.' And shall such sinners as we are, yea, some of the vilest sinners, say, that this is more ado than needs? Why, thou proud, insensible wretch, dost thou no better know thy own needs than so? Doth not thy soul need this, and more than this? What, darest thou justify thyself in thy ungodliness, and judge of godliness as a needless thing?

*Quest. 10.* Canst thou tell me how long thou wilt be of that mind? When thou liest a dying wilt thou then think that holiness was more ado than needs? When thou seest that the world hath left thee, and that thou art presently to appear before the Lord, speak as thou thinkest, man, hadst thou not rather then be found in the case of the holiest and most diligent saints on earth, than in the case of the careless, proud, or carnal? Will holy duty, or the neglect and deriding of it, be then more comfortable? Wouldst thou not then change states with one of those that did the most for God, and for their souls, and wouldst thou not say with Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be as his<sup>m</sup>?"

*Quest. 11.* What is it, do you think that is worth a man's pains and care, if God and everlasting glory be not? Is there any thing of greater worth? Man was not made for nothing, and idleness is no delight to him. Something he would be doing and looking after, and something he expects to make him happy, and that which he takes for his happiness, he cannot choose but think it worth all his pains. And have you found out any thing that is better than heaven? Will this world last longer? Or stand you in greater stead at last? Alas, that we should be put to ask or answer such questions as these! Why, sirs, either heaven or earth must have your love, and care and labour, and which do you think doth more deserve it? You can talk of the world from day to day, and you can work and toil for the world all the year long, and yet you never say it is more ado than needs. If your servant labour harder for you one day than God's servants do for him in a week, you will not tell him that he doth more than needs. Foolish worldlings, let me deal plainly with you, and tell you to your faces, it is you that make more ado than needs. Is the world worth all this care



and stir that you make about it? Is it worth your thoughts and unwearied diligences, and is it worth the venturing of your salvation to obtain it? I tell you it is not, and you partly know yourselves it is not. Why, where are your wits, to toil yourselves, all your lives for these trifles; and to tell them that labour for salvation, that they make more ado than needs? Well, hearken of the end, and then you shall see whether it be labour for heaven or for earth, that will be repented of. If you know not now, you shall shortly know it.

*Quest.* 12. One question more I shall yet put to you. Do you think the pains of duty to be greater than the pains of hell? If you do not, should not we choose the lesser to escape the greater? If you had not the love of God to make you delight in his service, methinks you should have that love of yourselves to make you fear his everlasting wrath. Never flatter yourselves with other thoughts. Believe it, if you will needs take it for a pain which should be your pleasure, you must undergo the pain of an unfeignedly holy life, or the pain of hell, choose you whether.

(4.) Another of their errors that hindereth conversion, is, That their own good meanings, and praying, and good works will make God amends for their sins, and after all will procure their acceptance with God. And if these will not do, they think the case is hard, for there is nothing else for us to do. And so they see not the evil of their own meanings and good works, and how much sin is in them to be wailed; nor do they see the need of a Christ in all, nor the need of a thorough change of their condition, that they may be made the justified sons of God, and have new hearts and new conversations. But they think while they live to the world and the flesh, to make up all and procure acceptance by good meaning, and good praying, and good works. I would not be misunderstood, as if I were speaking against that which is truly good in any. But I would desire these people well to consider; 1. That the meanings and works of unconverted men are not truly and properly good; but it is the end that denominateth the work; and seeing no unconverted man doth make God his ultimate end, therefore he hath properly no good meaning, nor work; for he meaneth all ultimately for his carnal self, for the flesh, and for the world, and for these are his works. As the true Chris-

tian doth make his worldly labour to be ultimately for God, so doth the ungodly make his seeming service of God to be ultimately for his flesh. 2. You should consider that all your good works must have a pardon themselves, and therefore cannot satisfy for your sins. 3. That if your works were perfectly good without any blemish, yet could they not satisfy for that sin which is past, but that must be expected only from the blood of Christ. It is, therefore, a lamentable case to hear many of the grossly ignorant people to talk of all their good meanings and praying, as if their confidence were all in these, while they make no mention of the blood of a Redeemer; or feel not the need of it; nor what it is that Christ hath done for them, nor how much they are beholden to him. 4. It is no patching up of your old unregenerate state, that will serve turn for your salvation, but you must be wholly made new. "He that is in Christ is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things have become new". It is not forsaking this or that sin, or falling to your prayers, that will serve turn; but you must have new hearts, and new ends, and a new conversation, and the main business and drift of your lives must be new. Those hearts that were set on the world before must be set on God; and those desires that run to the pleasures of the flesh, must run out after the pleasing of God. I say, it is not patching up the old condition, but all must be new.

(5.) Another error that hindereth conversion, is, The misunderstanding of those Scriptures that promise salvation to some particular graces or duties. As because the Scripture saith, "whosoever believeth in him shall not perish," therefore they say that they truly believe; and, therefore, though they have not such holiness of life, yet God hath promised them salvation. So, also, where it is said, that "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved," therefore they say, we call on the name of the Lord, and so shall be saved, though we be not converted, nor so holy as you require.

To these men I have these several things to say for the cure of this dangerous error.

1. Poor ignorant souls, they talk of they know not what: and suffer themselves to be deceived by words which

they understand not. If they did but know well what faith is, and what calling upon God is, they would never be troubled with this objection. To believe in Christ, is to believe him to be the Saviour of the church, to save them from their sins, and heartily to consent that he shall be so to us, to save us from our sins; and can you believe in him as a Saviour, and yet be unwilling to be saved by him? Sin is the mischief from which he saveth you, and conversion is one half of his saving work; and can you then say you believe, and therefore need not be converted? Why you may as well say, ‘I take such a man for my physician, and I trust in him for a cure, and therefore I need not be cured.’ Is not this nonsense, or a contradiction? And what is it better, to say, ‘I believe in Christ as my Saviour, that is, to save me from my sins, and therefore I may be saved, though I be not saved from my sins.’ These are the wise reasonings that many of our self-conceited hearers make use of to delude themselves and other men. And the very nature of faith is to take Christ as Christ, and as he is offered in the Gospel. As our teacher to guide us in the way of holiness, and as our king to rule us, as well as a sacrifice for our sins. And how can he do this for us, if we will not be converted?

2. Moreover, faith in Jesus Christ is always annexed to a belief in God the Father. “If you believe in God, believe also in me<sup>o</sup>.” “This is life eternal to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent<sup>p</sup>.” Now to believe in God, is to take him for our Maker, that hath absolute right in us, and absolute power over us, whom we must obey before all, and our happiness and chief good, whom we must love and desire above all. And can this be done without conversion?

3. To believe in Christ is ever accompanied with believing in the Holy Ghost, which is the receiving him to be our sanctifier; and can you do this, and yet be unconverted?

4. By this much that hath been said, you may perceive that conversion and faith is in a sort one and the same thing; to be a true believer, and to be converted, is all one; for conversion is to make you true believers. And is it not then a wise kind of cavil to say, that if you believe, you

<sup>o</sup> John xiv. 1.

<sup>p</sup> John xvii. 3.



may be saved without conversion? As much as to say, if I have the sunshine I may see without light; or if I have a soul, I need not life or understanding. I tell you there is no such thing as true faith without conversion.

5. Moreover, where true faith is, all other saving graces do accompany it; there is ever repentance, hope, love, humility, and a heavenly mind. So that it is no true faith which is separated from these, and which the ungodly deceive themselves with, but an opinion, and a mere ungrounded presumption.

(6.) Another error which hindereth men's conversion, is, Some false apprehensions of the doctrine of God's eternal decree of election or predestination; from which many desperate consequences are raised by them, to the deceiving of their own souls: and this I find abundance among us in this country deluded by; how the devil hath brought it to pass, I know not. They have many of them learned this foolish pretence; if God hath chosen us we shall be saved, and if he hath not, we shall not, whatsoever we do: no diligence will save a man that is not elected, and "it is not in him that willeth, nor in him that runneth, but in God that sheweth mercy." Those that God will save, shall be saved, whatsoever they be; and those that he will damn, shall be damned; and no man can have grace except God give it him; for we can do nothing of ourselves: and upon these grounds they think they may be secure, and cast all upon God, as a matter that they have little to do with; and think that their endeavours are to little purpose, if they should make never so much ado.

*Answ.* One would think common reason should teach men to answer such silly cavils as these; but because I find so many ignorant souls do stick at them, I shall give you a full answer in these particulars.

1. God electeth no man to the end without means, but to the end and means together. All that he electeth to salvation, he electeth to conversion and sanctification, and all that he denieth conversion to, he denieth salvation to also.

2. If therefore you care whether you are saved or damned, it concerneth you to make both your calling and election sure, 2 Pet. i. 10. Make but your calling sure, and you need not make any question of your election. Make

sure that you are converted, and hold fast what you have, and then you may be certain you shall be saved. You begin at the wrong end, if you would first ask whether you are elected, that you may know whether you shall be saved; but you must first try whether you are converted and saved from the power of sin, and then you may certainly gather that you are elected and shall be saved from hell. Will you begin at the top of the ladder, and not the bottom? Did God ever damn any man that was truly converted and sanctified, because he was not elected? No such matter: prove any such thing if you can: nay, we can fully prove the contrary, for he hath promised salvation to all that are truly converted and sanctified, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God<sup>9</sup>." With abundance the like which have been named frequently to you. And can you prove that ever God saved any man that was not converted, because he was elected? No such matter; for he electeth all that are converted. And he hath resolved to save none but the converted, as is plain, John iii. 3. Heb. xii. 14. and many other places formerly quoted.

3. These reasonings therefore of yours, if they keep you from conversion and a heavenly life, are a certain mark that you are without the evidence of your election; and if you so live and die, that you are none of the elect. And, therefore, by such reasonings you do but shew your own misery, like a man that hath the plague that will glory in his botch: it should make your hearts to tremble to find so sad a mark as this upon your souls, that you have a heart that dares hold off from conversion, and fetch vain pretences from the decree of God.

4. Consider also, that God's decrees are not the cause of your impenitency or any sin; though his grace be the cause of men's conversion; he is the beginner of our good, but we are the causes of our own evil: all our grace is from him, but all our sin is from ourselves: he giveth us grace before we so much as willed it, and accordingly he decreed to give it before the foresight of our own willing it; but he causeth not our sin, but only permitteth us to cause it, and accordingly he decreed not the event of sin before he did foresee that we would be sinners, and our wills of themselves

<sup>9</sup> Matt. v. 8.

would turn from God, and so proceed till grace recover us. You have no more ground therefore of excusing yourselves, because of the decree of God, than if he had made no such decree at all. What if I could foretel, from the obstinate wickedness of such a thief, or such a drunkard, that he will never be cured; is it long of me because I foreknew it? What if the prophet foretel Hazael, what cruelty he shall commit on the children of Israel, is the prophet therefore the cause of it?

5. Consider also, that if you knew not how to answer any objection of this nature, yet you have the very principles of reason and all religion to assure you that God is most wise, and good, and just, and holy. And, therefore, that he cannot be the author of your sin, nor shall you ever be able to fetch any just excuse from him. You might better have looked about you any where in the world for one to bear the blame of your miscarriages than the most wise and holy God. For nothing is more certain, than that the Infinite Good cannot be the author of evil; and whosoever it comes from, it cannot come from him. O how easily will God stop their mouths that excuse themselves by accusing him in so foul a cause!

6. And why do you not consider what madness it would be to argue about your bodies as you do about your souls. It is as true that God hath decreed how many years and days you shall live, as that he hath decreed whether you shall be saved. And I will refer it to your own reason, what you would think of the wit of that man that would give over eating and drinking, and say, 'God hath decreed how long I shall live, and if he have decreed that I shall live any longer, I shall, whether I eat and drink or not. And if he have not decreed that I shall live, it is not eating nor drinking that will keep me alive?' What would you say to such a man but this, that God decreeth no man to live, but by the ordinary means of living. And therefore ordinarily if you will give over eating and drinking, it is certain that you will give over living: and that God hath made no decree to save you alive whether you eat and drink, or not? So if a man should have a journey to go on life or death, what would you think of that man that will say, 'If God have decreed that I shall come to my journey's end, I shall do it,



whether I go or not; and if he have not decreed it, I shall never come thither, though I travel never so hard?' This is true; but if you hence infer, that therefore it is as good to sit still as go, you will shew your own folly, and not procure an excuse for your neglect. Why even so it is in our present case. If you will say, 'If God have elected me, I shall be saved; and if he have not, I shall not, whatsoever I do, and therefore I may spare my pains,' it is no wiser than to give over eating and drinking, because God hath decreed how long you shall live; or to give over travelling because God hath decreed whether you shall come to your journey's end. Will you be thus mad about the matters of your trades and callings in the world? Why do not all the weavers in this town then give over their trades, and say, 'If God have decreed that I shall live well and be rich, I shall be so whether I labour or not; and if he have not, my labour will not serve?' Why do you not give over ploughing and sowing, and say, 'If God have decreed that I shall have a crop, I shall have one, whether I plough and sow or not; and if he have not, I shall not, whatsoever I do?' If you will needs be fools, let it be about these worldly things, which you may better spare. Try your own opinion awhile, and give over eating and drinking and working; but do not befool yourselves about the one thing necessary, and play not the madman about the flames of hell; and do not in such jest throw away your salvation. It were an hundred times a wiser course for a man to set his house on fire, and say, 'If God have decreed the saving of it, the fire shall not burn it; if he have not, it will perish whatsoever I do.' I tell you again, God hath not ordinarily decreed the end without the means; and if you will neglect the means of salvation, it is a certain mark that God hath not decreed you to salvation. But you shall find that he hath left you no excuse, because he hath not thus predestinated you.

(7.) But you say, We cannot convert ourselves; what can man do without the grace of God? And, therefore, if God give us not grace we are excusable.

*Answ.* Do your consciences justify you, that you have done all that you can? Can you not go to church when you stay at home? Can you not go among the servants of God when you go to your worldly businesses, or to an ale-

house? Cannot you keep out of evil company? or cannot you so much as consider of your ways, or bethink you of the things of the life to come? I say, cannot you do these things if you will? and have you done these, or have you not? Have you avoided temptations and occasions of evil, and used the means of grace, and attended God in the use of his ordinances, and marked diligently what is said to you, and considered it when you came home? Have you not sinned and neglected the means of grace, both knowingly and wilfully? Conscience may tell you that you have, and God shall make you know that you have; and shortly you shall be convinced past denial, that you did not all that you could, nor forbore the evil that you might have forborne. And if you will refuse and abuse the help of God, can you expect that he should follow you still with his assistance? God will make you know one day, that nobody carried you into an alehouse, nor opened your mouth, nor poured down the drink! and nobody forced you to swear, or to rail, or hate religion, or quarrel with the word that should have saved you, but it was the malicious wickedness of your naughty hearts.

And for the power of conversion and believing itself, you must know that there is a two-fold power, the one natural, the other moral. The natural faculty of understanding and willingness every man hath; and if they have the use of reason, they have no physical impediment but they may use them, and if they hear the word, they have no such absence of the necessary object, as may make the word impossible to them. The moral power is nothing but a disposition or habit of the soul to believe or repent, &c. or a freedom of contrary habits. And this it is acknowledged that none have, but those that have proportionably received that grace that doth affect it: or, to speak as plain as I can to you, there is a power which lieth in being able to believe and repent if you will, or to do whatsoever we will, that concerneth us to do; and there is a willingness itself to execute this power, and that both actual and habitual. The former every one hath, the latter none but the godly have in sincerity, and those that make so great a stir about this in the church, do seem to be agreed in it for the main, and do not know it. For every man on both parties confesseth

that all men have the natural faculty of understanding and will, and that they have so much power that they can believe and love God above all if they will, and on the other side, I hope we are all agreed that wicked, unregenerate men are not truly willing to repent and believe, and that they have not the habit and disposition thereto, but have the contrary habits. Experience telleth us this, without any more ado. The latter sort of power then, about which all the controversy lieth, is nothing but the very willingness or grace itself, actual or habitual, or the absence of the contrary. And, therefore, it is all one to ask whether a wicked man have power to believe; and to ask whether he be a believer actually or habitually, or not an unbeliever; so that when we are all agreed that the natural power or faculty is present, and the moral, which is but the willingness, is absent, you can ground none of your excuses on the differences of the churches in this point. And as I have formerly said to you, if you will but reduce this last kind of power and impotency to its most proper expression, you will open the shame of your excuses. For morally to be unable to believe, is no more than to be unwilling to believe. And if you should say, 'I will not believe or repent, and therefore I am excusable,' what would your own conscience say to such an excuse? Natural impotency excuseth faults. He that can say, 'I would believe, but cannot, is excusable;' but never a one of you all shall ever be able to say this; but moral impotency aggravateth faults: the more will, the more sin. All the government and justice in the world is grounded upon this principle, and therefore all rewards and punishments are founded in the will of man, and all moral virtue and vice is resolved into that. And if you can but prove that a man offended willingly, you have proved him culpable: for nature hath taught all the world to bring the fault to the will, and there to leave it, and look no further for the cause: unless, as seducers may be made accessory by their persuasions, which yet is no excuse to the offender.

(8.) And whereas you allege that of the apostle, "It is not in him that willeth, or in him that runneth, but in God that sheweth mercy."

I answer, that the meaning is not, that our salvation is not in him that willeth, or in him that runneth. The apos-



tle talketh of no such thing. But it is about the giving of the gospel to them that had it not, and taking it from them that had forfeited it by their sin; or the giving of the first special grace to them that had it not, and the denying it them that had forfeited it by their neglects; and the meaning is no more than this, that the reason why God giveth one man or nation the preaching of the Gospel, when others for their sins are left in darkness, is not from any merit or precedent willing or running of their own, but from his mere mercy. And the reason why he blesseth the Gospel to the conversion of some, when he leaveth others to despise it by their wilful obstinacy, is not from the merits of any of those unregenerate men, or from any willing or running of theirs, but from God that sheweth mercy. So that you must note that it is, 1. One thing to ask the cause of man's damnation in himself considered, and this is not said to be because God will damn him, but because he hath deserved it by his sin: and so the cause of his preterition in the matter of special grace, is not barely because God will pass him by, but because he hath deserved it; for God denieth the Gospel, and faith by the Gospel, or his grace to effect it, to no man that hath not first deserved that denial. 2. It is another thing to ask the reason of men's salvation, which is not given in Scripture barely from the will of God, but from the faith and obedience of men, for it is an act of rewarding justice as well as of paternal love and mercy. 3. And it is yet another thing to ask the reason why God giveth any man the first special grace to repent and believe considering him simply in himself, and this is because that God is gracious, and no reason can be given but his own mercy; and thus far most of us are agreed. 4. And it is yet another thing to ask the reason why God giveth the special grace to this man, rather than that, comparatively considered, when he might justly have denied it to them both, and neither of them could plead their desert of it? And to this it is that the apostle's answer doth most square, or at least is fitly applied: "It is not in him that willeth or runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy:" so that, though no man can give any turning reason besides the mere will of God, why God should give this grace to Peter, rather than to Judas, yet we well know that he denieth it not to Judas without his own desert; though he gives it to Peter contrary to his desert.

(9.) And whereas it is further objected, that “whom he will he hardeneth,” and if God will harden us, how can we repent ?

*Answ.* 1. That he hardeneth no man without his own desert ; it is not till you have forfeited his softening grace by your resisting and abuse of it. 2. That his hardening is but his leaving you to yourselves, and taking away or denying you that Spirit which you have quenched ; or his carrying the just course of his providence so, as he knoweth your corrupt natures will be hardened thereby ; but he doth not put any hardness into your hearts, and therefore these afford you no excuse.

(10.) Another error that hindereth conversion, is, The placing of holiness in holding of certain opinions, and so turning from the life of faith and love, to speculation and vain janglings. If once men place their religion in their opinions, they may as well be hypocrites and self-deceivers in a true opinion, as in a false. This is a habit by which the devil hath caught multitudes of souls in all ages of the church, and especially of late : when he cannot keep men in open profaneness, then he will tempt them to think that such a party and such a sect are the only right and holy people ; and therefore if thou get but among them, and be one of that opinion and party, then thou shalt be saved. And hence it is that we see that men who are so zealous for their parties, and glory so much in several opinions, do yet many, and very many of them, live so unacquaintedly with God and heaven, and are such strangers to Christian charity, and can freely reproach both common Christians and ministers, and speak evil of the things they understand not, and take their railing accusations for their piety, and walk in discord, and hatred, and disunion from the church of God, and be glad when they can bear down the reputation of their brethren whose labours are necessary for the good of souls. And it is a common mark of an opinionative hypocrite, that he preferreth the interest of his opinion and party, before the interest of these common truths which salvation is clearly laid upon, and all Christians are agreed in. And he careth not to hinder ministers from propagating these common truths for the conversion of souls, so he might withal but hinder them from propagating that opinion which is con-

trary to his. And withal he layeth out more of his zeal and diligence for these opinions, than for the mortification of his lusts, and the maintaining of the union and communion of the saints, and walking holily with God, and uprightly with men.

I shall now say no more to these, but that “the kingdom of God consisteth not in meats and in drink, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost<sup>r</sup> :” and “that circumcision availeth nothing, nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by love<sup>s</sup>,” “and the new creature<sup>t</sup>.” “For in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free, male nor female;” and why may I not say on the same ground, young nor old, “but Christ is all, and in all<sup>u</sup>.” And that we have many promises of life and salvation to as many as repent and believe, and love God, and hope for the coming of Christ; but we have none to those that are of this or that party or opinion without these graces. And withal we know how tender God is of the unity of his church and people, and how much he hath spoken against division: and they that know not this, when they pretend to know things that are not half so clearly revealed, may be ashamed of their ignorance. I do not know where God hath commanded men to avoid them that hold this or that tolerable different opinion, or that follow this or that tolerable different practice; but I know where he hath commanded us to “mark them that cause division, and avoid them<sup>x</sup>.”

(11.) Another error that hindereth conversion, is, When men have gotten false conceits against the lawfulness or necessity of those holy ordinances, that are used by the people of God. For the life of religion lieth so much in the use of ordinances, that if people be brought out of conceit with these, they will not know what it is to be religious, nor what necessity there is of it. To give you an instance in some particulars.

1. Some grow into doubt of the necessity of family duty, and ask, where hath God commanded us to pray in our families? And that so oft? To which I answer, That it is sufficient that he hath bid us “pray always, and in all

<sup>r</sup> Rom. xiv. 17.

<sup>s</sup> Gal. v. 6.

<sup>t</sup> Gal. vi. 15.

<sup>u</sup> Col. ii. 11. Gal. iii. 28.

<sup>x</sup> Rom. xvi. 17.



things make our requests known to God with prayers, supplication, and thanksgiving<sup>y</sup>.” “All things are sanctified by the word and prayer<sup>z</sup>.” And therefore our families and callings are so. What have we common reason for, but to circumstantiate these duties, that God hath commanded to us for the substance. And common reason telleth us, that as we daily need God, we must daily seek supply of our needs; and so not only our persons, but our families as families, do need this mercy, and receive his mercy, and are related to him as the Head: so our families as families must call on him, and praise him, and love his headship. Besides the example of Daniel, that prayed three times a day in his house, so openly that his enemies had matter of accusation from the matter of his prayer. But I have had occasion to write more largely of this, and therefore will not now stand on it.

2. Others are brought to question the lawfulness of joining with our solemn assemblies, in hearing, or praying, or other public worship of God. The reasons are such as I am ashamed to stand to mention and confute them, and shall be weary to go over them, they are so vain and superficial, and answered at large by many. Some of their reasons are, because we are so bad, when many of the accusers are such themselves, that they deserve to be severely censured by the church; and because the church will not deal with them, they will judge the church, and take themselves too good to have communion with it, and the church unworthy to have communion with them. In a word, they would have not one but many cast out, whom they never dealt with in Christ's way, by admonition; and because it is not done out of Christ's way, to save a labour, they will turn schismatics.

And others of them withdraw on the pretence that we have no ministry. And how prove they that? You may wait long enough till you can have a word of Scripture or reason for the proof, or before they can answer that sufficient proof that is brought to the contrary. And if you do but put them to tell you which is the true church and ministers, and where it hath been? you shall see what work they will make in the end.

<sup>y</sup> Phil. iv. 6. 1 Thess. v. 17.

<sup>z</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5.

Others withdraw on pretence that we are unbaptized, to which end they must coin a new baptism, or else they are at a loss. And their arguing with us, will be much like the Papists in the point of transubstantiation, which requireth that men renounce their sense, and say, that they see not that which they see, and feel not or taste not that which indeed they feel and taste, and then they may come to be in the right. And so we must believe that we see none baptized in our churches, nor hear it, nor know of any such thing, and then we may come to be a church. If these brethren had half so much humility, or Christian love, and sense of the unity of the church of Christ as they should have, they would think on it, and think again, before they would either say of the universal church of Christ for one age, much more so for many ages, that it was no church, or not to be joined with. For he that dares renounce communion with the whole, doth make it hard to be discerned that he is a part: and he that is not a member of the body, will not find another body of Christ, whose communion is desirable. For my part, I believe the church hath had many errors in many ages, but I know no age since the creation, in which, if I had lived, I durst have disclaimed communion with her. Much less dare I think of running out of the way to heaven, which almost all they went in that are there; or of separating from all the church of Christ, from Adam till within this two hundred years, or thereabout: for if there were no church till then, there was no Head, no Christ, and so no Christianity. Yea, if there were none but for any one time. O! if it were the will of God that we could have as clear light in some other weighty points, as we have in Scripture for the baptism of the children of believers; how much would it do to quiet the understandings of many that are willing to know.

3. Others there be that despise the solemn praises of the congregations, because some psalms are such as all cannot truly, they think, recite.

1. As if no recital were lawful, but that which personally owneth the words, which can never be proved.

2. And do they not know that God himself hath prevented their objection? And that it flieth in his own face? Who knoweth not that these psalms, or at least very

many of them, were appointed for the solemn praise of God in the temple and congregations of the Jews in those times? And if those could lawfully use them, whose hearts were generally no more fitted to them than ours, may not we do so too?

3. And do they not know that their scruple doth make not only against psalms, but all public prayer also to be unlawful? For you cannot so speak in any such public prayers or praises, but there will be somewhat which will not suit with the particular dispositions of many in the congregation personally to own, or else your duty will be very defective. If you express rejoicing, must all drooping spirits separate from the assembly that cannot rejoice? But I will trouble you no more with this. If any are unsatisfied, let them read but Mr. Cotton's book on this question, and Mr. Ford's, and they may receive satisfaction. And if they will in this, and the aforesaid cases of baptism, separation, and the rest, divide from the church, and venture on damnation to save themselves the labour of reading that which is written to give them information, they must take what they get by it. Who can help it?

*Hindrance* 19. Another hindrance of conversion, is, A proud, unteachable frame of spirit: when people are so wise in their own eyes, they think they know enough already; and they scorn to be taught. If the wisest minister in England should live with such, they would but despise his counsel in every thing almost that crosseth their conceits. As long as he will humour them, and say as they say, he shall be a good man, and well spoken of by all; but if he will trouble them, and cross them, and tell them that which is against their present opinion, they think themselves wiser in this than he, and if they do not bid him look to himself, and let them alone, at least they will give him little thanks, and shew it by their small regard. Some of them will not come near us, nor give us the hearing, when we would teach them; and others, though they hear, do think themselves too wise to believe or obey. And thus they are fixed in a state of misery.

*Direct.* 19. If ever you will be converted, humbly submit to the word of God, and the instructions of those whom he hath appointed to inform you. What unreasonable pride



is it in you that are ignorant, unlearned men, to despise the counsel of the most able, godly ministers, and that in points wherein the godly through all the world are agreed? Yea, where God himself doth lead them by his word? Are not they likely to know more than you that have studied it all their days? Discourse with them, and try whether they or you have more knowledge. Consider what you do when you proudly reason against the necessity of conversion and a holy life. What, are you wiser than your teachers, and than the ablest teachers in the land? Yea, than all the ministers in the world, and than all the godly people in the world? Silly souls, that scarce know any of the principles of religion, are yet so proud as to despise the instruction from the wisest whoever. But if you think yourselves wiser than all the ministers in the world, will you also think yourselves wiser than God? I tell you, either illuminating grace, or the conviction of God's judgment, shall take down your lofty hearts ere long, and make you wish you had stooped to instruction. The day is coming that will abate your pride, and make you talk a little more submissively. Harken therefore in time, lest that befall you that is mentioned, Prov. v. 11—13. "Lest thou mourn at last when thy flesh and body are consumed; and say, how have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof? And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me?" If you are too wise to learn, you will prove in the end too foolish to be saved.

*Hindrance* 20 The last hindrance of conversion that I shall mention, is, Wilful obstinacy. When men have long resisted grace, they are given over oftentimes to themselves, and then they grow wilful: and when they have nothing else to say, why they should not be converted and become the people of God, they can say, they will not: they will never be so holy, nor deny their flesh, nor forsake the world, nor set themselves to a heavenly life: they will not believe that this is so necessary: nor will they ever yield to such a course: come on it what will, they are resolved against it; before they will do it they will venture their souls, and let God do with them what he will: and this desperate wilfulness is the devil's last hold.

*Direct.* 20. What direction should I give you against

this hindrance? When the will is so corrupt and obstinate, whatsoever I give it will be rejected. If you were but willing I should make no doubt but the work might prosper; or if you were but reasonable, and teachable, and persuadable, I should make no doubt, through the blessing of God, but the former means might make you yield; but if men be wilful and resolved to perish, what remedy? If men could give us any reason against conversion and a holy life, and did err through the mere mistake of their understandings, I should make no doubt, through the blessing of God, but by bare reason they might be rectified. But when their will is their reason, and they are resolved whatsoever comes of it, to hold on, and stop their ears against advice, what can we say to these men? All that I can do, is, to commend to them the former considerations, and to desire them to think of those motives before delivered, which may change their wills. But I have but little hope to prevail with them so much as soberly to think of it. And because so many of our poor people are of this strain, I am forced here to end this subject with lamentation.

I have preached now many sermons to you of conversion, and whether any souls be converted by it, the Lord knows, I know not. But the sad observation of the state of the world, and the uneffectualness of such endeavours, doth justly make me fear the issue. I know that both I and this congregation shall shortly appear before our Judge, to give a strict account of our lives, and if I have not preached these sermons in sincerity, with a true desire after the saving of your souls, then how shall I stand before the Lord, if the blood of Christ through faith and repentance prevail not for remission? And if any man or woman in this town or parish shall there appear in an unconverted state, what will they be able to say for themselves? Or how will they escape the threatened damnation? I am not out of hope that I shall meet some souls there, though yet I know not of them, that will be able to say, they were converted by these sermons; but I am so much afraid lest I shall meet abundance of you in an unconverted state, that I could even find in my heart to sit down and weep over these sermons now I have preached them. Alas! that you should be condemned by that which was intended to further your salva-

tion. Have I studied and preached all this to be a witness against you? I know, as true as you sit in these seats, that every soul of you shall be for ever in hell, that passeth out of the body in an unconverted state. And I know when you have heard so much of it, and been so often warned, and now are left without excuse, you will have a double condemnation. For now it is your mere wilfulness that must keep you unconverted. If you say, you cannot convert yourselves, I ask in a word, will you do what you can? Tell me, will you, or will you not? If you will not, what remedy? If you will, look over the directions I have given you, and set upon the faithful practice of them. Particularly, see that you presently search the Scriptures, and read good books, and forsake your evil company, and come not near them, but get among those that fear the Lord, and take all opportunities public and private, and inquire of your teachers and neighbours that can help you, what you shall do to be saved? And sin no more wilfully, but avoid the very temptations and appearances of evil, and be much with God in secret and open prayer: and dwell in the consideration of your own estate, of your own sin and danger, of Christ and duty, of grace and glory, and think not any pains too much for your salvation. What say you? Will you do but thus much, or will you not? If you will, you shall find no cause to repent of it, and God will not be wanting to that soul that doth not wilfully forsake him, but is willing to be conformed to the image of his Son; and to be what God would have him be. But, alas! it is this wilfulness, and obstinacy that undoes men: that is, that which shuts up the heart of God and man from compassionating the wicked in their everlasting misery. They did it wilfully; they would take no warning; they would hear no counsel; no saying would serve them; they chose their own destruction; it was their own doing; they were told of it a hundred times; they were entreated to consider, but they would not be entreated. What could have been said more to them? What could we do more for them? O that any one of you could tell me what I should say more, or what I should do now to save the souls of ignorant, fleshly, worldly sinners from damnation! And to convert the unconverted, and turn the hearts of men to God! O that you could but tell me how I might accom-



plish it ! Would I not do it ? The Lord knows, if any lawful and honest means would accomplish it I would do it, if I know my own heart. But if Christ could not be heard, why should I wonder if many will make light of what is said by such an one as I. If they will not hear the Lord that made them speaking in his word, why should I wonder if they will not hear him speaking by such a worm as I ? Sinners, what shall I say more to you ? I have told you of an everlasting glory which you might have ; if you will set light by it, and prefer your worldly things before it, who can help it ? I have told you of eternal misery that you are in danger of ; if you will venture on it, and not believe it till you feel it, and are past remedy, who can help it ? I have proved to you from the word of God, that without conversion there is no salvation : if you dare go on in an unconverted state, and keep your sin, and follow your fleshly desires and delights, and your worldly vanities and wicked company, if you will not be drawn to the ways of God, what remedy ? I have delivered my message, and I hope God will not require your blood at my hands. You shall all be forced to bear me witness that I told you there was no salvation without conversion ; and that I manifested to you the reasonableness of the offers of God : and if you be not converted, it is because you would not : and what a torment it will be everlastingly to your consciences to think that you wilfully damned yourselves, and to think that you wilfully refused your salvation ; and that you might have been in heaven as well as others, if you had not wilfully and obstinately rejected it. I say, what tormenting thoughts these will prove to you everlastingly, you cannot possibly now conceive, but then you shall know and feel it, if true conversion do not prevent it. Which that it may do, as it hath been the end of all these sermons, so shall it now, and as long as I have life and strength, be the matter of my prayers for you.



**A CALL**  
**TO THE**  
**UNCONVERTED**

**TO**  
**TURN AND LIVE,**

**AND ACCEPT OF MERCY WHILE MERCY MAY BE HAD, AS EVER  
THEY WOULD FIND MERCY IN THE DAY OF THEIR EXTREMITY :**

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**FROM THE LIVING GOD.**

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**TO WHICH ARE ADDED,**  
**FORMS OF PRAYER FOR MORNING AND EVENING FOR A FAMILY,**  
**FOR A PENITENT SINNER, AND FOR THE LORD'S DAY.**





## PREFACE.

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IN that short acquaintance I had with that reverend learned servant of Christ, Bishop Usher, he was oft, from first to last, importuning me to write a Directory for the several ranks of professed Christians, which might distinctly give each one their portion; beginning with the unconverted, and then proceeding to the babes in Christ, and then to the strong; and mixing some special helps against the several sins that they are addicted to. By the suddenness of his motion at our first congress, I perceived it was in his mind before; and I told him, both that it was abundantly done by many already; and that his unacquaintedness with my weakness, might make him think me fitter for it than I was. But this did not satisfy him, but still he made it his request. I confess I was not moved by his reasons, nor did I apprehend any great need of doing more than is done in that way: nor that I was likely to do more. And, therefore, I parted from him without the least purpose to answer his desire. But since his death, his words often came into my mind; and the great reverence I bore to him, did the more incline me to think with some complacency of his motion. And having of late intended to write a "Family Directory," I began to apprehend how congruously the fore-mentioned work should lead the way; and the several conditions of men's souls be spoken of, before we come to the several relations. Hereupon I resolved, by God's assistance, to proceed in the order following. First, to speak to the impenitent, unconverted sinners, who are not yet so much as purposing to turn; or at least are not setting about the work. And with these, I thought, a wakening persuasive was a more necessary means than mere directions; for directions suppose men willing to obey them. But the per-

sons that we have first to deal with, are wilful and asleep in sin, and as men that are past feeling, having given themselves over to sin with greediness. My next work must be for those that have some purposes to turn, and are about the work, to direct them for a thorough and a true conversion, that they miscarry not in the birth. The third part must be directions for the younger and weaker sort of Christians, that they may be established, built up, and persevere. The fourth part, directions for lapsed and back-sliding Christians, for their safe recovery. Besides these, there is intended some short persuasions and directions against some special errors of the times, and against some common, killing sins. As for directions to doubting, troubled consciences, that is done already. And the strong I shall not write directions for, because they are so much taught of God already. And then the last part is intended more especially for families, as such, directing the several relations in their duties. Some of these are already written. Whether I shall have life and leisure for the rest, God only knoweth; and therefore I shall publish the several parts by themselves, as I write them. And the rather because they are intended for men of different states, and because I would not deter them by the bulk or price, from reading what is written for their benefit. The use that this part is published for, is, 1. For masters and parents to read often in their families, if they have servants or children that are yet unconverted. 2. For all such unconverted persons to read and consider of themselves. 3. For the richer sort, that have any pity on such miserable souls, to give to the unsanctified that need them, (if they have not fitter at hand to use and give). The Lord awake us to work while it is day, for the saving of our own and others' souls, in subserviency to the blessed God, the Maker, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier of souls.

RICHARD BAXTER.

December 10, 1657.



*To all Unsanctified Persons that shall read this Book, especially  
my Hearers in the Parish of Kidderminster.*

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MEN AND BRETHREN,

THE eternal God that made you for life everlasting, and hath redeemed you by his only Son, when you had lost it, and yourselves; being mindful of you in your sin and misery, hath indited the Gospel, and sealed it by his Spirit, and commanded his ministers to preach it to the world, that pardon being freely offered you, and heaven being set before you, he might call you off from your fleshly pleasures, and from following after this deceitful world, and acquaint you with the life you were created and redeemed for, before you are dead and past remedy. He sendeth you not prophets or apostles, that receive their message by immediate revelation, but yet he calleth you by his ordinary ministers, who are commissioned by him to preach the same Gospel, which Christ and his apostles first delivered. The Lord standeth over you, and seeth how you forget him and your latter end, and how light you make of everlasting things, as men that understand not what they have to do or suffer. He seeth how bold you are in sin, and how fearless of his threatenings, and how careless of your souls, and how the works of infidels are in your lives, while the belief of Christians is in your mouths. He seeth the dreadful day at hand, when your sorrows will begin, and you must lament all this with fruitless cries in torment and desperation; and then the remembrance of your folly will tear your hearts, if true conversion now prevent it not. In compassion of your sinful, miserable souls, the Lord that better knows your case than you can know it, hath made it our duty to speak to you in his name<sup>a</sup>, and to tell you plainly of your sin and

<sup>a</sup> 2 Cor. v. 19.

misery, and what will be your end, and how sad a change you will shortly see, if yet you go on a little longer. Having bought you at so dear a rate as the blood of his Son Jesus Christ, and made you so free and general a promise of pardon, and grace, and everlasting glory, he commandeth us to tender all this to you, as the gift of God, and to entreat you to consider of the necessity and worth of what he offereth. He seeth and pitieth you, while you are drowned in worldly cares and pleasures, and eagerly following childish toys, and wasting that short and precious time for a thing of naught, in which you should make ready for an everlasting life, and therefore he hath commanded us to call after you, and to tell you how you lose your labour, and are about to lose your souls, and to tell you what greater and better things you might certainly have, if you would hearken to his call <sup>b</sup>. We believe and obey the voice of God; and come to you daily on his message, who hath charged us to preach and be instant with you in season, and out of season, and to lift up our voice like a trumpet, and shew you your transgressions and your sins <sup>c</sup>. But woe and alas! to the grief of our souls and your own undoing, you stop your ears, you stiffen your necks, you harden your hearts, and break our hearts, and send us back to God with groans, to tell him that we have done his message, but can do no good, nor scarcely get a sober hearing. O that our eyes were as a fountain of tears, that we might lament our ignorant, careless people that have Christ before them, and pardon, and life, and heaven before them, and have not hearts to know and value them! That might have Christ, and grace, and glory, as well as others, if it were not for their wilful negligence and contempt. O that the Lord would fill our hearts with more compassion to these miserable souls, that we might cast ourselves even at their feet, and follow them to their houses, and speak to them with our bitter tears. For long have we preached to many of them, as in vain: we study plainness to make them understand, and many of them will not understand us: we study piercing words to make them feel, but they will not feel. If the greatest matters would work with them, we should awake them. If the sweetest things would work, we should entice them, and win their hearts. If the most

<sup>b</sup> Isa. lv. 1—3.<sup>c</sup> Isa. lviii. 1, 2. 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2.

dreadful things would work, we should at least affright them from their wickedness. If truth and sincerity would take with them, we should soon convince them. If the God that made them, and the Christ that bought them might be heard, the case would soon be altered with them. If Scripture might be heard, we should soon prevail. If reason, even the best and strongest reason might be heard, we should not doubt but we should speedily convince them. If experience might be heard, and even their own experience, and the experience of all the world, the matter might be mended. Yea, if the conscience within them might be heard, the case would be better with them than it is. But if nothing can be heard, what then shall we do for them? If the dreadful God of heaven be slighted, who then shall be regarded? If the inestimable love and blood of a Redeemer be made light of, what then shall be valued? If heaven have no desirable glory with them, and everlasting joys be worth nothing; if they can jest at hell, and dance about a bottomless-pit, and play with the consuming fire, and that when God and man do warn them of it: what shall we do for such souls as these?

Once more in the name of the God of heaven, I shall do the message to you which he hath commanded us, and leave it in these standing lines to convert you or condemn you; to change you, or rise up in judgment against you, and to be a witness to your faces, that once you had a serious call to turn. Hear, all you that are the drudges of the world, and the servants of flesh and satan; that spend your days in looking after prosperity on earth, and drown your consciences in drinking, and gluttony, and idleness, and foolish sports, and know you sin, and yet will sin, as if you set God at defiance, and bid him do his worst, and spare not. Harken all you that mind not God, and have no heart to holy things, and feel no savour in the word or worship of the Lord, or in the thoughts or mention of eternal life; that are careless of your immortal souls, and never bestowed one hour in inquiring what case they are in, whether sanctified or unsanctified, and whether you are ready to appear before the Lord! Harken all you that by sinning in the light, have sinned yourselves into atheism and infidelity, and do not believe the word of God. "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear" the gracious and yet dreadful call of God! His eye



is all this while upon you, your sins are registered, and you shall surely hear of them again ; God keepeth the book now ; and he will write it upon your consciences with his terrors ; and then you also shall keep it yourselves. O sinners ! that you knew but what you are doing ! And who you are all this while offending ! The sun itself is darkness before the glory of that Majesty which you daily abuse and carelessly provoke. The sinning angels were not able to stand before him, but were cast down to be tormented with devils. And dare such silly worms as you so carelessly offend, and set yourselves against your Maker ! O that you did but a little know what a case that wretched soul is in, that hath engaged the living God against him ! The word of his mouth that made thee can unmake thee ; a frown of his face will cut thee off, and cast thee out into utter darkness : how eager are the devils to be doing with thee that have tempted thee, and do but wait for the word from God to take and use thee as their own ! And then in a moment thou wilt be in hell. If God be against thee, all things are against thee. This world is but thy prison for all that thou so lovest it : thou art but reserved in it to the day of wrath<sup>d</sup>. The Judge is coming, thy soul is even going : yea, a little while and thy friends shall say of thee, ‘ He is dead ; ’ and thou shalt see the things that thou dost now despise, and feel what now thou wilt not believe. Death will bring such an argument as thou canst not answer : an argument that shall effectually confute thy cavils against the word and ways of God, and all thy self-conceited dotages : and then how soon will thy mind be changed ! Then be an unbeliever if thou canst ! Stand then to all thy former words which thou wast wont to utter against the Scriptures, or against a holy and heavenly life ! Make good that cause then before the Lord, which thou wast wont to plead against thy teachers, and against the people that feared God. Then stand to thy old opinions, and contemptuous thoughts of the diligence of the saints. Make ready now thy strongest reasons, and stand up then before the Judge, and plead like a man, for thy fleshly, thy worldly, and ungodly life ; but know that thou must have one to plead with thee, that will not be outfaced by thee, nor so easily put off as we thy fel-

<sup>d</sup> Job xxi. 30.

low creatures. O poor deceived, wretched soul! there is nothing but a slender veil of flesh betwixt thee and that amazing sight, which will quickly silence thee and turn thy tune, and make thee of another mind! As soon as death has drawn this curtain, thou shalt see that which will quickly leave thee speechless. And how quickly will that day and hour come! When thou hast had but a few more merry hours, and but a few more pleasant draughts and morsels, and a little more of the honours and riches of the world, thy portion will be spent, and thy pleasures ended, and all is then gone that thou settest thy heart upon, of all that thou soldest thy Saviour and salvation for, there is nothing left but the heavy reckoning. As a thief that sits merrily spending the money in an alehouse which he hath stolen, when men are riding in post haste to apprehend him: so it is with you; while you are drowned in cares or fleshly pleasures, and making merry with your own shame, death is coming in post haste to seize upon you and carry your souls to such a place and state, as now you little know or think of. Suppose when you are bold and busy in your sin, that a messenger were but coming post from London to apprehend you, and take away your life, though you saw him not: yet if you knew of his coming it would mar your mirth, and you would be thinking of the haste he makes, and hearkening when he knocketh at your door. O that ye could but see what haste death makes, though yet it hath not overtaken you! No post so swift! No messenger more sure! As sure as the sun will be with you in the morning, though it hath many thousand, and hundred thousand miles to go in the night: so sure will death be quickly with you, and then where is your sport and pleasure? Then will you jest and brave it out? Then will you jeer at them that warned you? Then is it better to be a believing saint, or a sensual worldling? And then whose shall all those things be that you have gathered<sup>e</sup>? Do you not observe that days and weeks are quickly gone, and nights and mornings come apace, and speedily succeed each other? You sleep, but “your damnation slumbereth not;” you linger, “but your judgment this long time lingereth not<sup>f</sup>;” to which you are reserved for punishment<sup>g</sup>. “O that you were wise to understand this,

<sup>e</sup> Luke xii. 19.—21.<sup>f</sup> 2 Pct. ii. 3—5.<sup>g</sup> 2 Pct. 8, 9.

is all this while upon you, your sins are registered, and you shall surely hear of them again ; God keepeth the book now ; and he will write it upon your consciences with his terrors ; and then you also shall keep it yourselves. O sinners ! that you knew but what you are doing ! And who you are all this while offending ! The sun itself is darkness before the glory of that Majesty which you daily abuse and carelessly provoke. The sinning angels were not able to stand before him, but were cast down to be tormented with devils. And dare such silly worms as you so carelessly offend, and set yourselves against your Maker ! O that you did but a little know what a case that wretched soul is in, that hath engaged the living God against him ! The word of his mouth that made thee can unmake thee ; a frown of his face will cut thee off, and cast thee out into utter darkness : how eager are the devils to be doing with thee that have tempted thee, and do but wait for the word from God to take and use thee as their own ! And then in a moment thou wilt be in hell. If God be against thee, all things are against thee. This world is but thy prison for all that thou so lovest it : thou art but reserved in it to the day of wrath<sup>d</sup>. The Judge is coming, thy soul is even going : yea, a little while and thy friends shall say of thee, ‘ He is dead ;’ and thou shalt see the things that thou dost now despise, and feel what now thou wilt not believe. Death will bring such an argument as thou canst not answer : an argument that shall effectually confute thy cavils against the word and ways of God, and all thy self-conceited dotages : and then how soon will thy mind be changed ! Then be an unbeliever if thou canst ! Stand then to all thy former words which thou wast wont to utter against the Scriptures, or against a holy and heavenly life ! Make good that cause then before the Lord, which thou wast wont to plead against thy teachers, and against the people that feared God. Then stand to thy old opinions, and contemptuous thoughts of the diligence of the saints. Make ready now thy strongest reasons, and stand up then before the Judge, and plead like a man, for thy fleshly, thy worldly, and ungodly life ; but know that thou must have one to plead with thee, that will not be outfaced by thee, nor so easily put off as we thy fel-

<sup>d</sup> Job xxi. 30.



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<sup>e</sup> Luke xii. 19—21.<sup>f</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 3—5.<sup>g</sup> 2 Pet. 8, 9.

and that you did consider your latter end<sup>h</sup>.” “He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear” the call of God in this day of his salvation.

O careless sinners, that you did but know the love that you unthankfully neglect, and the preciousness of the blood of Christ which you despise! O that you did but know the riches of the Gospel! O that you did but know a little the certainty, and the glory, and blessedness of that everlasting life, which now you will not set your hearts upon, nor be persuaded first and diligently to seek<sup>i</sup>. Did you but know the endless life with God which you now neglect, how quickly would you cast away your sin! How quickly would you change your mind and life, your course and company, and turn the streams of your affections, and lay out your care another way! How resolutely would you scorn to yield to such temptations as now deceive you, and carry you away! How zealously would you bestir yourselves for that most blessed life! How earnest would you be with God in prayer! How diligent in hearing, learning, and inquiring! How serious in meditating on the laws of God<sup>k</sup>! How fearful of sinning in thought, word, or deed! And how careful to please God and grow in holiness! O what a changed people would you be! And why should not the certain word of God be believed, and prevail with you, which openeth to you these glorious and eternal things? Yea, let me tell you, that even here upon earth, you little know the difference between the life you refuse and the life you choose. The sanctified are conversing with God, when you scarce dare think of him, and when you are conversing but with earth and flesh, their conversation is in heaven, when you are utter strangers to it, and your belly is your god, and you are minding earthly things<sup>l</sup>. They are seeking after the face of God when you seek for nothing higher than this world. They are busily laying out for an endless life, where they shall be equal with the angels<sup>m</sup>, when you are taken up with a shadow, and a transitory thing of naught. How low and base is your earthly, fleshly, sinful life, in comparison of the noble, spiritual life of true believers? Many a time have I looked on such men with grief and pity to see them trudge about

<sup>h</sup> Deut. xxvii. 20.

<sup>i</sup> Heb. xi. 6. xii. 28. Matt. vi. 13.

<sup>k</sup> Psal. i. 2.

<sup>l</sup> Phil. iii. 18—20.

<sup>m</sup> Luke xx. 36.

the world, and spend their lives, care, and labour for nothing but a little food and raiment, or a little fading pelf, or fleshly pleasures, or empty honours, as if they had no higher thing to mind. What difference is there between the lives of these men, and of the beasts that perish, that spend their time in working, and eating, and living, but that they may live? They taste not of the inward heavenly pleasures which believers taste and live upon. I had rather have a little of their comfort, which the forethoughts of their heavenly inheritance doth afford them, though I had all their scorn, and sufferings with them, than to have all your pleasures and treacherous prosperities; I would not have one of your secret gripes and pangs of conscience, dark and dreadful thoughts of death and the life to come, for all that ever the world hath done for you or all that you should reasonably hope that it should do. If I were in your unconverted, carnal state, and knew but what I know, believed but what I now believe, methinks my life would be a foretaste of hell. How oft should I be thinking of the terrors of the Lord, and of the dismal day that is hasting on! Sure death and hell would be still before me. I should think of them by day, and dream of them by night; I should lie down in fear, and rise in fear, and live in fear, lest death should come before I were converted: I should have small felicity in any thing that I possessed, and little pleasure in any company, and little joy in any thing in the world, as long as I knew myself to be under the curse and wrath of God: I should still be afraid of hearing that voice, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee <sup>a</sup>." And that fearful sentence would be written upon my conscience; "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked <sup>o</sup>." O poor sinner! it is a more joyful life than this that you might live, if you were but willing, but truly willing to hearken to Christ, and to come home to God. You might then draw near to God with boldness, and call him your Father, and comfortably trust him with your souls and bodies. If you look upon promises, you may say, 'They are all mine;' if upon the curse, you may say, 'From this I am delivered.' When you read the law, you may see what you are saved from: when you read the Gospel, you may see him that redeemed you, and

<sup>a</sup> Luke xii. 20.<sup>o</sup> Isa. xlviii. 22. lvii. 21.



see the course of his love, and holy life, and sufferings, and trace him in his temptations, tears, and blood, in the work of your salvation. You may see death conquered, and heaven opened, and your resurrection and glorification provided for, in the resurrection and glorification of your Lord. If you look on the saints, you may say, 'They are my brethren and companions.' If on the unsanctified, you may rejoice to think that you are saved from that state. If you look upon the heavens, the sun, and moon, and stars innumerable, you may think and say, 'My Father's face is infinitely more glorious; it is higher matters that he hath prepared for his saints. Yonder is but the outward court of heaven. The blessedness that he hath promised me, is so much higher, that flesh and blood cannot behold it.' If you think of the grave you may remember that the glorified spirit, a living Head, and a loving Father, have all so near relation to your dust, that it cannot be forgotten or neglected; but will more certainly revive than the plants and flowers in the spring; because the soul is still alive, that is the root of the body, and Christ is alive, that is the root of both. Even death, which is the king of fears, may be remembered and entertained with joy, as being the day of your deliverance from the remnants of sin and sorrow, and the day which you believed, and hoped, and waited for, when you shall see the blessed things which you have heard of, and shall find by present joyful experience, what it was to choose the better part, and be a sincere believing saint. What say you sirs? is not this a more delightful life, to be assured of salvation, and ready to die, than to live as the ungodly, that have their hearts "overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day comes upon them unawares<sup>p</sup>." Might you not live a comfortable life, if once you were made the heirs of heaven, and sure to be saved when you leave the world? O look about you then, and think what you do, and cast not away such hopes as these for very nothing. The flesh and world can give you no such hopes or comforts.

And besides all the misery that you bring upon yourselves, you are the troublers of others as long as you are unconverted. You trouble magistrates to rule you by their

<sup>p</sup> Luke xxi. 34. 36.

laws. You trouble ministers, by resisting the light and guidance which they offer you : your sin and misery is the greatest grief and trouble to them in the world. You trouble the commonwealth, and draw the judgments of God upon us : it is you that most disturb the holy peace and order of the churches, and hinder our union and reformation, and are the shame and trouble of the churches where you intrude, and of all the places where you are. Ah, Lord ! how heavy and sad a case is this, that even in England, where the Gospel doth abound above any other nation in the world ; where teaching is so plain and common, and all the helps we can desire are at hand, when the sword hath been hewing us, and judgment hath run as a fire through the land : when deliverances have relieved us, and so many admirable mercies have engaged us to God, and to the Gospel, and to an holy life ; that yet after all this our cities, and towns, and countries, shall abound with multitudes of unsanctified men, and swarm with so much sensuality, as every where to our grief we see. One would have thought, that after all this light, and all this experience, and all these judgments and mercies of God, the people of this nation should have joined together, as one man, to turn to the Lord ; and should have come to their godly teachers, and lamented all their former sins, and desired them to join with them in public humiliation to confess them openly, and beg pardon of them from the Lord, and should have craved their instruction for the time to come, and be glad to be ruled by the spirit within, and the ministers of Christ without, according to the word of God. One would think, that after such reason and Scripture evidence as they hear ; and after all these means and mercies, there should not be an ungodly person left among us, nor a worldling, nor a drunkard, or a hater of reformation, or an enemy to holiness, be found in all our towns or countries. If we be not all agreed about some ceremonies or forms of government, one would think that, before this, we should have been all agreed to live a holy and heavenly life, in obedience to God, his word and ministers, and in love and peace with one another. But, alas ! how far are our people from this course ! Most of them, in most places, do set their hearts on earthly things, and seek not first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof,

but look at holiness as a needless thing ; their families are prayerless, or else a few heartless, lifeless words must serve instead of hearty, fervent, daily prayer ; their children are not taught the knowledge of Christ, and the covenant of grace, nor brought up in the nurture of the Lord, though they falsely promised this in their baptism. They instruct not their servants in the matters of salvation ; but so their work be done they care not. There are more oaths, and curses, and ribald and railing speeches in their families, than gracious words that tend to edification. How few are the families that fear the Lord, and inquire after his word and ministers, how they should live, and what they should do ; and are willing to be taught and ruled, and that heartily look after everlasting life ! And those few that God hath made so happy, are commonly the bye word of their neighbours ; when we see some live in drunkenness, and some in pride and worldliness, and most of them have little care of their salvation, though the cause be gross, and past all controversy, yet will they hardly be convinced of their misery, and more hardly recovered and reformed ; but when we have done all that we are able, to save them from their sins, we leave them, most of them, as we find them. And if, according to the law of God, we cast them out of the communion of the church, when they have obstinately rejected all our admonitions, they rage at us as if we were their enemies, and their hearts are filled with malice against us, and they will sooner set themselves against the Lord, and his laws, and church, and ministers, than against their deadly sins. This is the doleful case of England ; we have magistrates that countenance the ways of godliness, and a happy opportunity for unity and reformation is before us ; and faithful ministers long to see the right ordering of the church, and of the ordinances of God ; but the power of sin in our people doth frustrate almost all. No where almost can a faithful minister set up the unquestionable discipline of Christ, or put back the most scandalous, impenitent sinners from the communion of the church, and participation of the sacrament, but the most of the people rail at them, and revile them : as if these ignorant, careless souls were wiser than their teachers, or than God himself ; and fitter to rule the church than they. And thus in the day of our vi-



sitation, when God calls upon us to reform his church, though magistrates seem willing, and faithful ministers are willing, yet are the multitude of the people still unwilling ; and sin hath so blinded them, and hardened their hearts, that even in these days of light and grace, they were the obstinate enemies of light and grace, and will not be brought by the calls of God, to see their folly, and know what is for their good. O that the people of England knew, "at least in this their day, the things that belong unto their peace, before they are hid from their eyes<sup>a</sup> !" O foolish and miserable souls ! who hath bewitched<sup>r</sup> your minds into such madness, and your hearts into such deadness, that you should be such mortal enemies to yourselves, and go on so obstinately towards damnation, that neither the word of God, nor the persuasions of men can change your minds, or hold your hands, or stop you till you are past remedy ! Well, sinners ! this life will not last always ; this patience will not wait upon you still. Do not think that you shall abuse your Maker and Redeemer, and serve his enemies, and debase your souls, and trouble the world, and wrong the church, and reproach the godly, and grieve your teachers, and hinder reformation, and all this upon free cost. You know not yet what this must cost you, but you must shortly know, when the righteous God shall take you in hand, who will handle you in another manner than the sharpest magistrates, or the plainest dealing pastors did, unless you prevent the everlasting torments by a sound conversion, and a speedy obeying the call of God. "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear," while mercy hath a voice to call.

One desperate objection (which I have after touched, but with too much brevity,) I find sticks close to the hearts of many ungodly men. They think that God doth not so much care what men think, or say, or do, as we persuade them ; and therefore they care so little themselves. For the convincing of such atheistical men as these, I shall propound the following questions.

1. Dost thou think God careth whether thou be a man or not ? If not, who made thee, and preserved thee ? If he do, then sure he careth whether thou behave thyself as a man. No man is so foolish as to make any instrument,

<sup>a</sup> Luke xix. 42.

<sup>r</sup> Gal. iii. 1.

build a house, or a ship, and not care, when he hath done, whether it be good for the use he made it. Do not, for shame then, impute such folly to the God of wisdom, as if he made so noble a creature as man, and endowed him with such noble faculties, and all for nothing, and careth not what becometh of him when he hath done. Why should God give thee a mind that can know him, and a heart that can love him, when he careth not whether thou know him, and love him, or not? Do you not see, that in the course of nature, every thing is fitted to its use? The beasts know not God, nor are capable of loving him, because they were made for no such use; but thy capacity shews that thou wast made for God, and for a life to come.

2. Dost thou think that God is every where present, and infinite, and all-sufficient? If not, thou dost not believe that he is God, and it is unreasonable to imagine, that God hath made a world that is greater, and more extensive or comprehensive than himself! For none can communicate more than he hath. But if thou art forced to confess that God is every where, and as sufficient for every single man, as if he had never another creature to regard, thou must needs confess then that he is not careless of the hearts and ways of the sons of men: for they are things that are still before his eyes. It is base and blasphemous thoughts of God, as if he were limited, absent, or insufficient, that makes men think him so regardless of their hearts and ways.

3. Dost thou think that God careth what becomes of thy body? Whether thou be sick or well? Whether thou live or die? If not, then how camest thou by thy life, and health, and mercies? If they came from any other fountain, tell us from whence: is it not to God that thou prayest for thy life and health? Darest thou say to him, 'I will not depend upon thee? I will not be beholden to thee for the life and mercies of another day?' If so, then thou art a blind atheist. But if thou thinkest he cares for thy body, canst thou think he cares not more for thy soul? If he must regard to furnish thee with mercies, he will sure have a regard whether thou love and live to him that gave them.

4. Dost thou believe that God is the governor of the world, or not? If not, then there can be no rightful government. For as no justice of peace can have a power,

but from the sovereygn ; so no sovereygn can have power, but from God ; nor be a lawful governor, but under him : and then all the world would be turned into confusion. But if thou must needs confess that God is the Governor of the world, what an unwise, unrighteous governor wouldst thou make him, if thou thinkest that he regardeth not the hearts and ways of those whom he doth govern ! This still is but to deny him to be God.

5. If God do not care so much what is in our hearts, or what we do, why then should he make a law for our hearts, and words, and ways ? Would he command us that which he doth not care for ? Would he so strictly forbid sin, if he were indifferent whether we sin or not ? Would he promise eternal life to the holy and obedient, if he cared not whether we be holy and obedient, or no ? Would he threaten hell to all that are ungodly, if he cared not whether we are godly or not ? Darest thou say, that the Almighty, Holy God is fain to rule the world by a lie, and to deceive men into obedience ? Yea, the very law of nature itself, doth contain not only precepts of our duty, but the hopes and fears of the life to come, without which the world could not be governed : and certainly they are no deceits, by which an infinite wisdom, and power, and goodness, doth govern the world.

6. If God did not much regard our hearts and lives, why doth he make all the world to be our servants ? Doth he give us the sun, and moon, and stars, the earth, and all creatures to attend us, and serve us with their lives and virtues, and yet doth he not care for our hearts or service ? This is as foolish as to say, that he hath made all the world in vain, and careth not for it, now he hath made it.

7. If he cared not for the frame of our hearts and lives, he would not have sent his Son to redeem us, and to cleanse us from iniquity, and sanctify us a peculiar people to himself<sup>s</sup>. Surely the price that was paid for sinners, and the wonderful design of God in our redemption, doth shew that he makes not light of sin, and that he is wonderfully in love with holiness.

8. If God did not regard our hearts and lives, he would not have made it the office of his ministers, to call us daily to repentance and a holy life ; nor commanded them to



make such a stir with sinners to win them unto God ; he would not have appointed all his ordinances, public and private, also to this end. Doth God command all this ado for a thing he regards not ?

9. Nor would he punish the world with hell hereafter, or so many judgments here, as thousands feel, if he cared not what they think or do. Methinks, men that are so often groaning under his rod, should feel that he looks after their hearts and ways.

10. And how can the Holy Ghost be our Sanctifier, if God be so indifferent, whether we be clean or unclean ? Dare you think that the Holy Ghost doth take upon him a needless work ?

11. Methinks you might perceive, even in the malice of the tempter, that God is holy, and hateth iniquity ; and his word is true, that telleth us of the eternal punishment of sin. The Scripture tells us of the angels' fall, and that many of them are become devils by their sin, and are malicious enemies of man's salvation. And do you not easily perceive it to be true ? How came they else to be such importunate tempters of men, which we feel, alas ! by too much experience ? Or if this evidence be not palpable enough to convince the infidel ; how come they to make so many bargains with conjurers and witches, to draw them from God and salvation, as they have done ? How come they to appear in terrible shapes to so many as they have done, and still upon designs that declare their own dejected, base condition, and their enmity to God and man, and their eager desire to engage men in a way of sin ? If any infidel will not believe that really there have been witches and apparitions, and consequently that there are devils, who are miserable, malicious spirits, who by sin are cast out of the favour of God, and would draw men into their miserable case ; let them come and reason the case with me, and I shall quickly tell them of so many sure and undeniable instances, and give them so much proof of the truth of it, as shall leave them nothing to say against it, unless they will still say, ' We will not believe.' Yea, so much, as that I will not be beholden to the vilest atheist or infidel to believe it, if he will not quite renounce his reason, but give it leave to see the light.

12. Lastly, if yet you think that God (the Sovereign Ruler of the world, that is every where present, and pre-

serveth all) doth care so little what men are, or what they do, whether they are holy or unholy, obedient or disobedient to his laws; then methinks that you yourselves, and all the rest of your fellow-creatures, should little care.

Two questions therefore I must propound to you :

1. Do not you care what men say of you, or do to you? Are you contented that men slander you, and abuse you, or set your houses or towns on fire, or destroy your cattle, or wives or children, and imprison, wound or kill yourselves? If you will make a great matter what men say or do against you, can you be so mad, (for it is no better) as to think that the omnipotent, holy God, should little regard what is said or done against himself, and against his servants, and that by such silly worms as men, that are his workmanship? Did not selfishness make you blind and partial, you would know that one sin against God, deserves more punishment than ten thousand thousand times as much against such silly things as you. Do you make no matter of difference between a bad servant and a good? an obedient and disobedient child? a son that will lay down his life for you, and a son that longs for your death, that he may have your land? Between a faithful friend and a deadly enemy? If you do not, you are not men, but something else in human shape. If you do, then you are somewhat worse than men, if yet you would have the blessed God, to make no great difference between those that love him above all the world, and those that regard him not; between the holy and unholy soul.

And 2. I would ask you whether you would have the rulers of the world to take care what men say or do, or would you not? If not, then you would have all the world turned loose, and you would have every man that is poorer than you, have leave to rob you: and every man that hateth you, have leave to beat, or kill you; and every man that liketh your house, or lands, or goods, or cattle, to have leave to take them from you; and every man defile your wives or daughters, that hath a mind to it? And so we should see whither it is that infidelity leads men. But if you like not this, then you are most unreasonable, if you would have magistrates to be regardful of men's actions, and not God. If magistrates must hang men for wronging you,

and whether he will give you corn without tillage and labour, and whether he will bring you to your journey's end without your travel or carriage : and if you speed well in this, then try whether he will bring you to heaven without your diligent use of means, and sit down and say, ' We cannot sanctify ourselves.'

And for the point of Freewill, which you harp so long upon, divines are not so much disagreed about it as you imagine. Augustine as well as Pelagius, Calvin as well as Arminius, the Dominicans as well as the Jesuits, all do generally maintain, that man hath freewill ; the orthodox say, that freewill is corrupted and disposed to evil. Epiphanius condemned Origen for saying, that man had lost the image of God, and makes it a point of heresy. And yet one may truly say, ' That man hath lost God's image ;' and another may truly say, ' That he hath not lost it.' For there is a twofold image of God on man : the one is natural, and that is our reason and freewill, and this is not lost ; the other is qualitative and ethical, and this is our holiness, and this is lost, and by grace restored. No man of brains denieth, that a man hath a will that is naturally free ; it is free from violence, and it is a self-determining principle ; but it is not free from evil dispositions. It is habitually averse to God and holiness, and inclined to earthly, fleshly things. It is enslaved by a sinful bias. This, no man, methinks, that is a Christian, should deny ; and of the aged, I see not how an infidel can deny it. Alas, we easily confess to you, that you have not this spiritual, moral freewill, which is but your right inclination, and your habitual willingness itself. If you had a will that were freed from wicked inclinations, I had no need to write such books as these to persuade you to be willing in a case which your own salvation lieth on. To the grief of our souls, we perceive after all our preachings and persuasions, that the ungodly have not this spiritual freewill. But this is nothing but your willingness itself, and inclination to be willing ; and therefore the want of it is so far from excusing you, that the more you want it (that is, the more you are wilful in sin), the worse you are, and the sorer will be your punishment. And our preaching and persuasions, and your hearing and considering, are the appointed means to get this moral power of freedom, that is to make you truly willing.



Well sirs, I have but three requests to you, and I have done : First, That you will seriously read over this small treatise ; (and if you have such that need it in your families, that you read it over and over to them : and if those that fear God would go now and then to their ignorant neighbours, and read this or some other book to them of this subject, they might be a means of winning of souls). If we cannot entreat so small a labour of men for their own salvation, as to read such short instructions as these, they set little by themselves, and will most justly perish. Secondly, When you have read over this book, I would entreat you to go alone, and ponder a little what you have read, and bethink you, as in the sight of God, whether it be not true, and do not nearly touch your souls, and whether it be not time for you to look about you : and also entreat that you will fall upon your knees and beseech the Lord that he will open your eyes to understand the truth, and turn your hearts to the love of God, and beg of him all that saving grace, that you have so long neglected, and follow it on from day to day, till your hearts be changed ; and withal, that you will go to your pastors (that are set over you, to take care of the health and safety of your souls, as physicians do for the health of your bodies) and desire them to direct you what course to take, and acquaint them with your spiritual estate, that you may have the benefit of their advice and ministerial help. Or if you have not a faithful pastor at home, make use of some other in so great a need. Thirdly, When by reading, consideration, prayer and ministerial advice, you are once acquainted with your sin and misery, with your duty and remedy, delay not, but presently forsake your sinful company and courses, and turn unto God, and obey his call, and as you love your souls, take heed that you go not on against so loud a call of God, and against your own conscience, lest it go worse with you in the day of judgment, than with Sodom and Gomorrah. Inquire of God, as a man that is willing to know the truth, and not be a wilful cheater of his soul. Search the Holy Scripture daily, and see whether these things be so or not ; try impartially whether it be safer to trust heaven or earth ; and whether it be better to follow God or man, the Spirit or the flesh ; and better to live in holiness or sin. And whe-

ther an unsanctified estate be safe for you to abide in one day longer ; and when you have found out which is best, resolve accordingly, and make your choice without any more ado. If you will be true to your own souls, and do not love everlasting torments, I beseech you, as from the Lord, that you will but take this reasonable advice. O what happy towns and countries, and what a happy nation might we have, if we could but persuade our neighbours to agree to such a necessary motion ! What joyful men would all faithful ministers be, if they could but see their people truly heavenly and holy ! This would be the unity, the peace, the safety, the glory of our churches, the happiness of our neighbours, and the comfort of our souls. Then how comfortable should we preach absolution and peace to you, and deliver the sacraments, which are the seals of peace to you. And with what love and joy might we live among you ; at your death-bed, how boldly might we comfort and encourage your departing souls ; and at your burial, how comfortably might we leave you in the grave, in expectation to meet your soul in heaven, and to see your bodies raised to that glory.

But if still the most of you will go on in a careless, ignorant, fleshly, worldly, or unholy life ; and all our desires and labours cannot so far prevail, as to keep you from the wilful damning of yourselves, we must then imitate our Lord, who delighteth himself in those few that are his jewels, and the little flock that shall receive the kingdom, when the most shall reap the misery which they sowed. In nature excellent things are few. The world hath not many suns or moons ; it is but a little of the earth that is gold or silver ; princes and nobles are but a small part of the sons of men. And it is no great number that are learned, judicious or wise, here in this world. And therefore the gate being strait, and the way narrow, there be but few that find salvation ; yet God will have his glory and pleasure in those few. And when Christ “ shall come with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, his coming will be glorified in his saints, and admired in all true believers <sup>u</sup>. ”

And for the rest, as God the Father vouchsafed to create them, and God the Son disdained not to bear the penalty of their sins upon the cross; and did not judge such sufferings vain, though he knew that by refusing the sanctification of the Holy Ghost, they would finally destroy themselves; so we that are his ministers, though these be not gathered, judge not our labour wholly lost. See Isa. xlix. 5.

Reader, I have done with thee, (when thou hast perused this book); but sin hath not yet done with thee (even those that thou thoughtest had been forgotten long ago), and satan hath not yet done with thee (though now he be out of sight); and God hath not yet done with thee, because thou wilt not be persuaded to have done with deadly, reigning sin. I have written thee this persuasive, as one that is going into another world, where the things are seen that I here speak of, and as one that knoweth thou must shortly be there thyself. As ever thou wouldst meet me with comfort before the Lord that made us; as ever thou wilt escape the everlasting plagues prepared for the final neglecters of salvation, and for all that are not sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and love not the communion of the saints, as members of the holy catholic church; and as ever thou hopest to see the face of Christ the Judge, and of the majesty of the Father, with peace and comfort, to be received into glory, when thou art turned naked out of this world: I beseech thee, I charge thee, to hear and obey the call of God, and resolvedly to turn, that thou mayst live. But if thou wilt not, even when thou hast no true reason for it, but because thou wilt not; I summon thee, answer for it before the Lord, and require thee there to bear me witness I gave thee warning, and that thou wert not condemned for want of a call to turn and live, but because thou wouldst not believe it, and obey it; which also must be the testimony of thy serious monitor,

RICHARD BAXTER.

December 11, 1657.





# A CALL

TO THE

## UNCONVERTED.

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EZEKIEL xxxiii. 11.

*Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*

IT hath been the astonishing wonder of many a man, as well as me, to read in the holy Scripture, how few will be saved, and that the greatest part even of those that are called, will be everlastingly shut out of the kingdom of heaven, and tormented with the devils in eternal fire. Infidels believe not this when they read it, and therefore must feel it. Those that do believe it, are forced to cry out with Paul, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out<sup>a</sup>." But nature itself doth teach us all, to lay the blame of evil works upon the doers, and therefore when we see any heinous thing done, a principle of justice doth provoke us to inquire after him that did it, that the evil of the work may return the evil of shame upon the author. If we saw a man killed and cut in pieces by the way, we should presently ask, 'Oh! who did this cruel deed?' If the town were wilfully set on fire, you would ask, 'What wicked wretch did this?' So when we read that the most will be firebrands of hell for ever, we must needs think with our-

<sup>a</sup> Rom. xi. 13.

selves, how comes this to pass? (And, who is it long of?) Who is it that is so cruel as to be the cause of such a thing as this? And we can meet with few that will own the guilt. It is indeed confessed by all, that satan is the cause, but that doth not resolve the doubt, because he is not the principal cause. He doth not force men to sin, but tempt them to it, and leaves it to their own wills, whether they will do it or not. He doth not carry men to an alehouse, and force open their mouths, and pour in the drink; nor doth he hold them that they cannot go to God's service, nor doth he force their hearts from holy thoughts. It lieth, therefore, between God himself, and the sinner, one of them must needs be the principal cause of all this misery, which ever it is: for there is no other to cast it upon. And God disclaimeth it. He will not take it upon him. And the wicked disclaim it usually, and they will not take it upon them, and this is the controversy that is here managed in the text.

The Lord complaineth of the people, and the people think it is long of God: the same controversy is handled in chap. xviii. where, (ver. 25.) they plainly say, "That the way of the Lord is not equal." And God saith, "It is their ways that are not equal." So here they say, (ver. 19.) "If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how shall we then live?" As if they should say, If we must die and be miserable, how can we help it? As if it were not long of them but God. But God, in my text, doth clear himself of it, and telleth them how they may help it if they will, and persuadeth them to use the means: and if they will not be persuaded, he lets them know that it is long of themselves; and if this will not satisfy them, he will not, therefore, forbear to punish them. It is he that will be their Judge, and he will judge them according to their ways; they are no judges of him, or of themselves, as wanting authority, wisdom, and impartiality, nor is it their cavilling and quarrelling with God, that shall serve their turn, or save them from the execution of justice which they murmur at.

The words of this verse contain, 1. God's purgation or clearing himself from the blame of their destruction. This he doth, not by disowning his law, that the "wicked shall die;" nor by disowning his judgments and execution according to that law, or giving them any hope that the law

*That is, who is the cause of it?*



shall not be executed ; but by profession that it is not their death that he takes pleasure in, but their returning rather, that they may live. And this he confirmeth to them by his oath. 2. An express exhortation to the wicked to return ; wherein God doth not only command, but persuade and condescend also to reason the case with them, Why will they die ? The direct end of this exhortation is, that they may turn and live. The secondary, or reserved ends, upon supposition that this is not attained, are these two : First, To convince them by the means which he used, that it is not long of God if they be miserable. Secondly, To convince them from their manifest wilfulness, in rejecting all his commands and persuasions, that it is long of themselves ; and they die even because they will die.

The substance of the text doth lie in these observations following.

Doct. I. It is the unchangeable law of God, that wicked men must turn or die.

Doct. II. It is the promise of God that the wicked shall live, if they will but turn.

Doct. III. God takes pleasure in men's conversion and salvation, but not in their death or damnation : he had rather they would return and live, than go on and die.

Doct. IV. This is a most certain truth, which because God would not have men to question, he hath confirmed it to them solemnly by his oath.

Doct. V. The Lord doth redouble his commands and persuasions to the wicked to turn.

Doct. VI. The Lord condescendeth to reason the case with them, and asketh the wicked, why they will die ?

Doct. VII. If after all this, the wicked will not return, it is not long of God that they perish, but of themselves : their own wilfulness is the cause of their damnation ; they therefore die because they will die.

Having laid the text open before your eyes in these plain propositions, I shall next speak somewhat of each of them in order, though very briefly.

Doct. I. It is the unchangeable law of God, that wicked men must turn or die.

If you will believe God, believe this. There is but one of these two ways for every wicked man, either conversion,

or damnation. I know the wicked will hardly be persuaded, either of the truth or equity of this. No wonder if the guilty quarrel with the law. Few men are apt to believe that which they would not have to be true; and fewer would have that to be true, which they apprehend to be against them. But it is not quarrelling with the law, or with the judge, that will save the malefactor: believing and regarding the law might have prevented his death; but denying and accusing it, will but hasten it. If it were not so, a hundred would bring their reason against the law, for one that would bring his reason to the law: and men would rather choose to give their reasons why they should not be punished, than to hear the commands and reasons of their governors which require them to obey. The law was not made for you to judge, but that you might be ruled and judged by it. But if there be any so blind, as to venture to question either the truth or justice of the law of God, I shall briefly give you that evidence of both, which, methinks, would satisfy a reasonable man. And first, if you doubt whether this be the word of God or not, besides a hundred other texts, you may be satisfied by these few. "Verily, I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven<sup>b</sup>." "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God<sup>c</sup>." "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold all things are become new<sup>d</sup>." "Ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him<sup>e</sup>." "Without holiness no man shall see God<sup>f</sup>." "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his<sup>g</sup>." "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature<sup>h</sup>." "According unto his abundant grace, he hath begotten us again to a lively hope<sup>i</sup>." "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever<sup>k</sup>." "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envyings, and

<sup>b</sup> Matt. xviii. 3.<sup>c</sup> John iii. 3.<sup>d</sup> 2 Cor. v. 17.<sup>e</sup> Col. iii. 9, 10.<sup>f</sup> Heb. xii. 14.<sup>g</sup> Rom. viii. 8, 9.<sup>h</sup> Gal. vi. 15.<sup>i</sup> 1 Pet. i. 3.<sup>k</sup> Ver. 23.

evil-speakings, as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby<sup>1</sup>.” “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God<sup>m</sup>.” “And the Lord loveth the righteous; but the wicked his soul hateth<sup>n</sup>.” As I need not stay to open these texts which are so plain, so I think I need not add any more of that multitude which speak the like. If thou be a man that dost believe the word of God, there is already enough to satisfy thee, that the wicked must be converted or condemned. You are already brought so far, that you must either confess that this is true, or say plainly, you will not believe the word of God. And if once you be come to that pass, there is but small hopes of you: look to yourselves as well as you can; for it is like you will not be long out of hell. You would be ready to fly in the face of him that should give you the lie; and yet dare you give the lie to God? But if you tell God plainly you will not believe him, blame him not if he never warn you more, or if he forsake you, and give you up as hopeless: for to what purpose should he warn you, if you would not believe him. Should he send an angel from heaven to you, it seems you would not believe, for an angel can speak but the word of God; and if an angel should bring you any other Gospel, you are not to receive it, but to hold him accursed<sup>o</sup>. And surely there is no angel to be believed before the Son of God, who came from the Father to bring us this doctrine. If he be not to be believed, then all the angels in heaven are not to be believed. And if you stand on these terms with God, I shall leave you till he deal with you in a more convincing way. God hath a voice that will make you hear! Though he entreat you to hear the voice of his Gospel, he will make you hear the voice of his condemning sentence, without entreaty. We cannot make you believe against your wills; but God will make you feel against your wills. But let us hear what reason you have, why you will not believe this word of God, which tells us, that the wicked must be converted or condemned. I know your reason; it is because that you judge it unlikely that God should be so unmerciful; you think it cruelty to damn men everlastingly for so small a thing as a sinful life. And

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2.<sup>m</sup> Psal. ix. 17.<sup>n</sup> Psal. xi. 4.<sup>o</sup> Gal. i. 8.



this leads us up to the second thing, which is to justify the equity of God in his laws and judgment.

And first, I think you will not deny but that it is most suitable to an immortal soul, to be ruled by laws that promise an immortal reward, and threaten an endless punishment. Otherwise the law should not be suited to the nature of the subject, who will not be fully ruled by any lower means than the hopes or fears of everlasting things: as it is in case of temporal punishment. If a law were now made, that the most heinous crimes should be punished with a hundred years captivity, this might be of some efficacy, as being equal to our lives. But if there had been no other penalties before the flood, when men lived eight or nine hundred years, it would not have been sufficient, because men would know that they might have so many hundred years impunity afterward. So it is in our present case.

2. I suppose you will confess, that the promise of an endless and inconceivable glory, is not unsuitable to the wisdom of God, or the case of man. And why then should you not think so of the threatening of an endless and unspeakable misery?

3. When you find it in the word of God, that so it is, and so it will be, do you think yourselves fit to contradict this word? Will you call your Maker to the bar, and examine his word upon the imputation of falsehood? Will you sit upon him, and judge him by the law of your conceits? Are you wiser and better, and more righteous than he? Must the God of heaven come to school to you to learn wisdom? Must Infinite Wisdom learn of folly; and Infinite Goodness be corrected by a swinish sinner, that cannot keep himself an hour clean? Must the Almighty stand at the bar of a worm? O horrid arrogancy of senseless dust! Shall every mole, or clod, or dunghill, accuse the sun of darkness, and undertake to illuminate the world? Where were you when the Almighty made the laws, that he did not call you to his counsel? Surely he made them before you was born, without desiring your advice, and you came into the world too late for to reverse them. If you could have done so great a work, you should have stepped out of your nothingness, and have contradicted Christ when he was on earth, or Moses before him, or have saved Adam and his

sinful progeny from the threatening death, that so there might have been no need of Christ. And what if God withdraw his patience and sustentation, and let you drop into hell while you are quarrelling with his words, will you then believe that there is a hell?

4. If sin be such an evil that it required the death of Christ for its expiation, no wonder if it deserve our everlasting misery.

5. And if the sins of the devils deserved an endless torment, why not also the sin of man?

6. And methinks, you should perceive that it is not possible for the best of men, much less for the wicked to be competent judges of the desert of sin. Alas! we are both blind and partial. You can never know fully the desert of sin, till you fully know the evil of sin; and you can never know the evil of sin, till you fully know, 1. The excellency of the soul which it deformeth. 2. And the excellency of holiness, which it doth obliterate. 3. And the reason and the excellency of the law which it violateth. And, 4. The excellency of the glory which it doth despise. And, 5. The excellency and office of reason which it treadeth down. 6. No, nor till you know the infinite excellency, almightiness, and holiness of that God, against whom it is committed. When you fully know all these, you shall fully know the desert of sin. Besides, you know that the offender is too partial to judge the law, or the proceedings of his judge. We judge by feeling, which binds our reason. We see in common worldly things, that most men think the cause is right which is their own; and that all is wrong that is done against them; and let the most wise, or just, or impartial friends persuade them to the contrary, and it is all in vain. There are few children but think the father unmerciful, or that he dealeth hardly with them, if he whip them. There is scarce the vilest, swinish wretch, but thinketh the church doth wrong him, if they excommunicate him; or scarce a thief or murderer that is hanged, but would accuse the law and judge of cruelty, if that would serve turn.

7. Can you think that an unholy soul is fit for heaven? Alas! they cannot love God here, nor do him any service which he can accept. They are contrary to God, they loathe that which he most loveth; and love that which he

abhorreth. They are incapable of that imperfect communion with him, which his saints here do partake of. How then can they live in that perfect love of him, and full delights and communion with him, which is the blessedness of heaven? You do not accuse yourselves of unmercifulness, if you make not your enemy your bosom counsellor; or if you take not your swine to bed and board with you: no, nor if you take away his life, though he never sinned. And yet will you blame the absolute Lord, the most wise and gracious Sovereign of the world, if he condemn the unconverted man to perpetual misery.

USE. I beseech you now, all that love your souls, that instead of quarrelling with God, and with his word, you will presently stoop to it, and use it for your good. All you that are yet unconverted in this assembly, take this as the undoubted truth of God; you must ere long be converted or condemned, there is no other way but Turn or Die. When God, that cannot lie, hath told you this, when you hear from the Maker and Judge of the world, it is time for him that hath ears to hear; by this time you may see what you have to trust to. You are but dead and damned men, except you will be converted. Should I tell you otherwise I should deceive you with a lie. Should I hide this from you I should undo you, and be guilty of your blood, as the verses before my text assure me, ver. 8. "When I say to the wicked man, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand." You see then, though this be a rough, unwelcome doctrine, it is such as we must preach, and you must hear. It is easier to hear of hell than feel it. If your necessities did not require it we should not gall your tender ears, with truths that seem so harsh and grievous. Hell would not be so full, if people were but willing to know their case, and to hear and think of it. The reason why so few escape it, is, because they strive not to enter in at the strait gate of conversion, and to go the narrow way of holiness while they have time; and they strive not, because they be not awakened to a lively feeling of the danger they are in: and they be not awakened, because they are loath to hear or think of it; and that is partly, through foolish tenderness, and carnal self-



truth, methinks the weight of it should force you to remember it, and it should follow you and give you no rest till you love ; and partly, because they do not well believe the word that threateneth it. If you will not thoroughly believe this are converted. If you had but once heard this word, by the voice of an angel, 'Thou must be converted or condemned ; turn or die !' Would it not stick in your mind, and haunt you night and day ? So that in your sinning you would remember it, as if the voice were still in your ears, 'Turn or Die !' O happy were your souls, if it might thus work with you, and never be forgotten, or let you alone till it hath driven home your hearts to God. But if you will cast it out by forgetfulness, or unbelief, how can it work to your conversion and salvation ? But take this with you, to your sorrow, though you may put this out of your minds, you cannot put it out of the Bible ; but there it will stand as a sealed truth, which you shall experimentally know for ever, that there is no other way, but Turn or Die.

O what is the matter then that the hearts of sinners be not pierced with such a weighty truth ! A man would think now that every unconverted soul that hears these words should be pricked to the heart, and think with themselves, 'This is my own case,' and never be quiet till they found themselves converted. Believe it, sirs, this drowsy, careless temper will not last long. Conversion and condemnation, are both of them awakening things : and one of them will make you feel ere long, I can foretell it as truly, as if I saw it with my eyes, that either grace or hell will shortly bring these matters to the quick, and make you say, 'What have I done ? What foolish, wicked courses have I taken ?' The scornful and the stupid state of sinners, will last but a little while : as soon as they either Turn or Die, the presumptuous dream will be at an end, and then their wits and feeling will return.

But, I foresee there are two things that are like to harden the unconverted, and make me lose all my labour, except they can be taken out of the way : and that is, the misunderstanding of those two words, 'The wicked,' and 'Turn.' Some will think with themselves, it is true, the wicked must Turn or Die ; but what is that to me ? I am not Wicked, though I am a sinner, as all men be. Others will think, it

is true that we must turn from our evil ways ; but I am turned long ago, I hope this is not now to do. And thus, while wicked men think they are not wicked, but are already converted, we lose all our labour in persuading them to turn. I shall therefore, before I go any further, tell you here, who are meant by ‘ the wicked,’ and who they be that must Turn or Die, and also what is meant by Turning ; and who they be that are truly converted ; and this I have purposely reserved for this place, preferring the method that fits my end.

And here you may observe, that in the sense of the text, a wicked man and a converted man are contraries. No man is a wicked man that is converted, and no man is a converted man that is wicked : so that to be a wicked man, and to be an unconverted man, is all one. And therefore in opening one, we shall open both.

Before I can tell you what either wickedness or conversion is, I must go to the bottom, and fetch up the matter from the beginning.

It pleased the great Creator of the world, to make three sorts of living creatures ; angels he made pure spirits without flesh, and therefore he made them only for heaven and not to dwell on earth. Beasts were made flesh without immortal souls ; and therefore they were made only for earth, and not for heaven. Man is of a middle nature, between both, as partaking of both flesh and spirit : and therefore he was made both for heaven and earth. But as his flesh is made to be but a servant to his spirit, so is he made for earth, but as his passage, or way to heaven, and not that this should be his home or happiness. The blessed state that man was made for, was to behold the glorious majesty of the Lord and to praise him among his holy angels, and to love him, and be filled with his love for ever. And as this was the end that man was made for, so God did give him means that were fitted to the attaining of it. These means were principally two. First, The right inclination and disposition of the mind of man. Secondly, The right ordering of his life and practice. For the first, God suited the disposition of man to his end ; giving him such knowledge of God, as was fit for his present state, and a heart disposed and inclined to God in holy love. But yet he did not fix or confirm him in this condition ; but having made him a free agent, he left

him in the hands of his own free-will. For the second, God did that which belonged to him; that is, he gave man a perfect law requiring him to continue in the love of God, and perfectly to obey him. By the wilful breach of this law, man did not only forfeit his hopes of everlasting life, but also turned his heart from God, and fixed it on these lower, fleshly things, and hereby did blot out the spiritual image of God from his soul. So that man did both fall short of the glory of God, which was his end, and put himself out of the way, by which he should have attained it; and this, both as to the frame of his heart, and of his life. The holy inclination and love of his soul to God, he lost; and instead of it, he contracted an inclination and love to the pleasing of his flesh, or carnal self, by earthly things: growing strange to God, and acquainted with the creature: and the course of his life was suited to the bent and inclination of his heart; he lived to his carnal self, and not to God; he sought the creature for the pleasing of his flesh, instead of seeking to please the Lord. With this nature or corrupt inclination, we are all now born into the world; for "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" As a lion hath a fierce and cruel nature, before he doth devour, and as an adder hath a venomous nature before she stings, so in our very infancy we have those sinful natures or inclinations, before we think, or speak, or do amiss. And hence springeth all the sin of our lives. And not only so, but when God hath of his mercy provided us a remedy, even the Lord Jesus Christ, to be the Saviour of our souls, and bring us back to God again, we naturally love our present state, and are loath to be brought out of it, and therefore are set against the means of our recovery; and though custom hath taught us to thank Christ for his good will, yet carnal self persuadeth us to refuse his remedies, and to desire to be excused when we are commanded to take the medicines which he offereth, and are called to forsake all, and follow him to God and glory.

I pray you read over this leaf again, and mark it; for in these few words you have a true description of our natural state; and consequently of a wicked man. For every man that is in this state of corrupted nature, is a wicked man, and in a state of death.

By this also you are prepared to understand what it is to



be converted, to which end you must further know, that the mercy of God, not willing that man should perish in his sin, provided a remedy, by causing his Son to take our nature, and being in one person God and man, to become a Mediator between God and man; and by dying for our sins on the cross, to ransom us from the curse of God, and the power of the devil: and having thus redeemed us, the Father hath delivered us into his hands, as his own. Hereupon the Father and the Mediator do make a new law and covenant for man. Not like the first, which gave life to none but the perfectly obedient, and condemned man for every sin; but Christ hath made a law of grace, or a promise of pardon and everlasting life to all, that by true repentance, and by faith in Christ, are converted unto God. Like an act of oblivion, which is made by a prince, to a company of rebels, on condition they will lay down their arms, and come in, and be loyal subjects for the time to come.

But because the Lord knoweth that the heart of man is grown so wicked, that for all this, men will not accept of the remedy if they be left to themselves; therefore the Holy Ghost hath undertaken it as his office, to inspire the apostles, and seal up the Scripture by miracles and wonders, and to illuminate and convert the souls of the elect.

So that by this much you see, that as there are Three Persons in the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; so each of these Persons have their several works, which are eminently ascribed to them.

The Father's works were, to create us, to rule us as his rational creatures, by the law of nature, and judge us thereby; and in mercy to provide us a Redeemer when we were lost; and to send his Son, and accept his ransom.

The works of the Son for us were these; to ransom and redeem us by his sufferings and righteousness, to give out the promise or law of grace, and rule and judge the world as their Redeemer, on terms of grace, and to make intercession for us, that the benefits of his death may be communicated, and to send the Holy Ghost, (which the Father also doth by the Son).

The works of the Holy Ghost for us are these: to indite the holy Scriptures, by inspiring, and guiding the prophets and apostles; and sealing the word, by his miraculous gifts

and works ; and the illuminating and exciting the ordinary ministers of the Gospel ; and so enabling them, and helping them to publish that word, and by the same word illuminating and converting the souls of men. So that as you could not have been reasonable creatures, if the Father had not created you ; nor have had any access to God, if the Son had not redeemed you ; so neither can you have a part in Christ, or be saved, except the Holy Ghost do sanctify you.

So that by this time you may see the several causes of this work. The Father sendeth the Son ; the Son redeemeth us, and maketh the promise of grace ; the Holy Ghost inditeth and sealeth this Gospel ; the apostles are the secretaries of the Spirit, to write it ; the preachers of the Gospel to proclaim, and persuade men to obey it ; and the Holy Ghost doth make their preaching effectual, by opening the hearts of men to entertain it. And all this to repair the image of God upon the soul, and to set the heart upon God again, and take it off the creature, and carnal self, to which it is revolted, and so turn the current of this life into a heavenly course, which before was earthly ; and all this by the entertainment of Christ by faith, who is the physician of the soul.

By this which I have said, you may see what it is to be wicked, and what it is to be unconverted. Which I think, will be yet plainer to you, if I describe them, as consisting of their several parts : and for the first, A wicked man may be known by these three things :

First, He is one that placeth his chief content on earth ; and loveth the creature more than God ; and his fleshly prosperity, above the heavenly felicity ; he savoureth the things of the flesh, but neither discerneth nor savoureth the things of the Spirit : though he will say, that heaven is better than earth, yet doth he not really so esteem it to himself. If he might be sure of earth, he would let go heaven, and had rather stay here than be removed thither. A life of perfect holiness, in the sight of God, and in his love, and praises for ever in heaven, doth not find such liking with his heart as a life of health, and wealth, and honour here upon earth. And though he falsely profess that he loveth God above all, yet indeed he never felt the power of divine love within him, but his mind is more set on the world, or fleshly pleasures, than

on God. In a word, whoever loveth earth above heaven, and fleshly prosperity more than God, is a wicked, unconverted man.

On the other side, a converted man is illuminated to discern the loveliness of God ; and so far believeth the glory that is to be had with God, that his heart is taken up to it, and set more upon it than on any thing in this world. He had rather see the face of God, and live in his everlasting love and praises, than have all the wealth or pleasure of the world. He seeth that all things else are vanity, and nothing but God can fill the soul : and therefore let the world go which way it will, he layeth up his treasures and hopes in heaven ; and for that he is resolved to let go all. As the fire doth mount upward, and the needle that is touched with the loadstone, still turneth to the north, so the converted soul is inclined unto God. Nothing else can satisfy him : nor can he find any content and rest but in his love. In a word, all that are converted do esteem and love God better than all the world, and the heavenly felicity is dearer to them than their fleshly prosperity. The proof of what I have said, you may find in these places of Scripture, Phil. iii. 18. 21. Matt. vi. 19—21. Col. iii. 1—4. Rom. viii. 3. 6—9. 18. 23. Psal. lxxiii. 25, 26.

Secondly, A wicked man is one that maketh it the principal business of his life to prosper in the world, and attain his fleshly ends. And though he may read and hear, and do much in the outward duties of religion, and forbear disgraceful sins ; yet this is all but upon the bye, and he never makes it the trade and principal business of his life to please God, and attain everlasting glory, but puts off God with the leavings of the world, and gives him no more service than the flesh can spare ; for he will not part with all for heaven.

On the contrary, a converted man is one that makes it the principal care and business of his life to please God, and to be saved ; and takes all the blessings of this life, but as accommodations in his journey towards another life, and useth the creature in subordination unto God, he loveth a holy life, and longeth to be more holy ; he hath no sin but what he hateth, and longeth, and prayeth, and striveth to be rid of. The drift and bent of his life is for God ; and if he sin, it is contrary to the very bent of his heart and life, and



therefore he rises again, and lamenteth it, and dare not wilfully live in any known sin. There is nothing in this world so dear to him but he can give it up to God, and forsake it for him and the hopes of glory. All this you may see in Col. iii. 1—5. Matt. vi. 20. 33. Luke xviii. 22, 23. 29. xiv. 18. 24. 26, 27. Rom. viii. 13. Gal. v. 24. Luke xii. 21., &c.

Thirdly, the soul of a wicked man did never truly discern and relish the mystery of redemption, nor thankfully entertain an offered Saviour, nor is he taken up with the love of the Redeemer, nor willing to be ruled by him, as the physician of his soul, that he may be saved from the guilt and power of his sins, and recovered unto God; but his heart is insensible of this unspeakable benefit, and is quite against the healing means by which he should be recovered. Though he may be willing to be carnally religious, yet he never resigned up his soul to Christ, and to the motions and conduct of his word and Spirit.

On the contrary, the converted soul having felt himself undone by sin; and perceiving that he hath lost his peace with God, and hopes of heaven, and is in danger of everlasting misery, doth thankfully entertain the tidings of redemption, and believing in the Lord Jesus as his only Saviour, resigneth up himself to him for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He taketh Christ as the life of his soul, and liveth by him, and useth him as a salve for every sore, admiring the wisdom and love of God in his wonderful work of man's redemption. In a word, Christ doth even dwell in his heart by faith, and the life that he now liveth is by the faith of the Son of God, that hath loved him, and gave himself for him. Yea, it is not so much he that liveth, as Christ in him: for these, see John i. 11, 12. iii. 19, 20. Rom. viii. 9. Phil. iii. 7—10. Gal. ii. 20. John xv. 2—4. 1 Cor. i. 20. ii. 2.

You see now in plain terms, from the word of God, who are the wicked, and who are the converted. Ignorant people think, that if a man be no swearer, nor curser, nor railer, nor drunkard, nor fornicator, nor extortioner, nor wrong any body in their dealings, and if they come to church, and say their prayers, these cannot be wicked men. Or if a man that hath been guilty of drunkenness, swearing, gaming, or the like vices, do but forbear them for the time to come, they

think that this is a converted man. Others think, that if a man that hath been an enemy, and a scorner of godliness, do but approve it, and join himself with those that are godly, and be hated for it by the wicked, as the godly are, that this needs must be a converted man. And some are so foolish as to think they are converted, by taking up some new and false opinion; and falling into some dividing party as Baptists, Quakers, Papists, or such like. And some think, if they have but been affrighted by the fears of hell, and had convictions, and gripes of conscience, and thereupon have purposed, and promised, amendment, and taken up a life of civil behaviour, and outward religion, that this must needs be true conversion. And these are the poor deluded souls that are like to lose the benefit of all our persuasions. And when they hear that the wicked must Turn or Die, they think that this is not spoken of them; for they are not wicked, but are Turned already. And therefore it is, that Christ told some of the rulers of the Jews, who were more grave and civil than the common people, that "Publicans and harlots do go into the kingdom of God before them<sup>p</sup>." Not that a harlot or gross sinner can be saved without conversion, but because it was easier to make those gross sinners perceive their sin and misery, and the necessity of a change, when the more civil sort do delude themselves by thinking that they are converted already when they be not.

O sirs, conversion is another kind of work than most are aware of. It is not a small matter to bring an earthly mind to heaven, and to shew man the amiable excellencies of God, till he be taken up in such love to him, that can never be quenched, to break the heart for sin, and make him fly for refuge unto Christ, and thankfully embrace him as the life of his soul, to have the very drift and bent of the heart and life to be changed; so that a man renounceth that which he took for his felicity, and placeth his felicity where he never did before, and liveth not to the same end, and driveth not on the same design in the world as formerly he did: in a word, he that is in Christ, "is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new<sup>q</sup>." He hath a new understanding, a new will and resolution, new sorrows, and desires, and love and delight; new thoughts,

<sup>p</sup> Matt. xxi. 31.

<sup>q</sup> 2 Cor. v. 17.

new speeches, new company, (if possible) and a new conversation. Sin that before was a jesting matter with him, is now so odious and terrible to him, that he flies from it as from death. The world that was so lovely in his eyes, doth now appear but as vanity and vexation ; God that was before neglected, is now the only happiness of his soul ; before he was forgotten and every lust preferred before him ; but now he is set next the heart, and all things must give place to him ; and the heart is taken up in the attendance, and observance, of him, and is grieved when he hides his face, and never thinks itself well without him. Christ himself, that was wont to be slightly thought of, is now his only hope and refuge, and he lives upon him, as on his daily bread, he cannot pray without him, nor rejoice without him, nor think, nor speak, nor live, without him. Heaven itself, that before was looked upon but as a tolerable reserve, which he hoped might serve turn better than hell, when he could not stay any longer in the world, is now taken for his home, the place of his only hope and rest, where he shall see, and love, and praise that God that hath his heart already. Hell, that did seem before but as a bugbear to frighten men from sin, doth now appear to be a real misery, that is not to be ventured on or jested with. The works of holiness, which before he was weary of, and seemed to be more ado than needs, are now both his recreation, and his business, and the trade he lives upon. The Bible, which was before to him but almost as a common book, is now as the law of God, as a letter written to him from heaven, and subscribed with the name of the Eternal Majesty ; it is the rule of his thoughts, and words, and deeds ; the commands are binding, the threats are dreadful and the promises of it speak life to his soul. The godly that seemed to him but like other men, are now the most excellent and happiest on earth. And the wicked, that were his playfellows, are now his grief ; and he that could laugh at their sins, is more ready now to weep for their sin and misery<sup>r</sup>. In short, he hath a new end in his thoughts, and a new way in his endeavours, and therefore his heart and life are new. Before, his carnal self was his end ; and his pleasure, and worldly profits and credits were his way. And now, God and everlasting glory are his end ; and Christ,

<sup>r</sup> Psalm xv. 4. xvi. 3. Phil. iii. 18.



and the Spirit, and word, and ordinances, holiness to God, and righteousness and mercy to men, these are his way. Before, self was the chiefest ruler, to which the matters of God and conscience must stoop and give place : and now, God in Christ, by the Spirit, word, and ministry, is the chiefest ruler, to whom both self, and all the matters of self, must give place. So that this is not a change in one, or two, or twenty points, but in the whole soul ; and the very end and bent of the conversation. A man may step out of one path into another, and yet have his face still the same way, and be still going towards the same place ; but it is another matter to turn quite back again, and take his journey the clean contrary way to a contrary place. So is it here ; a man may turn from drunkenness to thriftiness, and forsake his good fellowship, and other gross, disgraceful sins, and set upon some duties of religion, and yet be going still to the same end as before, intending his carnal self above all, and giving it still the government of his soul. But when he is converted, this self is denied, and taken down, and God is set up, and his face is turned the contrary way ; and he that before was addicted to himself, and lived to himself, is now by sanctification devoted unto God, and liveth unto God. Before he asked himself what he should do with his time, his parts, and his estate, and for himself he used them ; but now he asketh God what he shall do with them, and useth them for him : before he would please God so far as might stand with the pleasure of his flesh and carnal self, but not to any great displeasure of them ; but now he will please God, let flesh and self be never so much displeased. This is the great change that God will make upon all that shall be saved.

You can say that the Holy Ghost is our Sanctifier ; but do you know what sanctification is ? Why, this is it that I have now opened to you : and every man or woman in the world must have this, or be condemned to everlasting misery. They must Turn or Die.

Do you believe all this, sirs, or do you not ? Surely you dare not say you do not ; for it is past all doubt or denial. These are not controversies, where one learned, pious man is of one mind, and another of another ; where one party saith this, and the other saith that ; Papists and Baptists,

and every sect among us, that deserve to be called Christians, are all agreed in this that I have said ; and if you will not believe the God of truth, and that in a case where every sect and party doth believe him, you are utterly inexcusable.

But if you do believe this, how comes it to pass that you are so quiet in an unconverted state ? Do you think you are converted ? And can you find this wonderful change upon your souls ? Have you been thus born again, and made anew ? Be not these strange matters to many of you ? And such as you never felt upon yourselves ? If you cannot tell the day or week of your change, or the very sermon that converted you, yet do you find that the work is done, and such a change indeed there is ? And that you have such hearts as are before described ? Alas, the most do follow their worldly business, and little trouble their minds with such thoughts. And if they be but restrained from scandalous sins, and can say, ‘ I am no whoremonger, nor thief, nor curser, nor swearer, nor tippler, nor extortioner ; I go to the church and say my prayers ;’ they think that this is true conversion, and they shall be saved as well as any. Alas, this is foolish cheating of yourselves ; this is too much contempt of an endless glory, and too gross neglect of your immortal souls. Can you make so light of heaven and hell ? your corpse will shortly lie in the dust, and angels or devils will presently seize upon your souls ; and every man or woman of you all, will shortly be among other company, and in another case than now you are ; you will dwell in these houses but a little longer ; you will work in your shops and fields but a little longer ; you will sit in these seats, and dwell on this earth but a little longer ; you will see with those eyes, and hear with those ears, and speak with those tongues but a little longer, till the resurrection day ; and can you make shift to forget this ? O what a place will you be shortly in of joy or torment ! O what a sight will you shortly see in heaven or hell ! O what thoughts will shortly fill your hearts with unspeakable delight or horror ! What work will you be employed in ! To praise the Lord with saints and angels, or to cry out in fire unquenchable with devils ; and should all this be forgotten ? And all this will be endless, and sealed up by an unchangeable decree. Eternity, eternity will be the measure of your

joys or sorrows, and can this be forgotten? And all this is true sirs, most certainly true : when you have gone up and down a little longer, and slept and awaked but a few times more, you will be dead and gone, and find all true that now I tell you ; and yet can you now so much forget it? You shall then remember you heard this sermon, and that this day, in this place, you were remembered of these things, and perceive them matters a thousand times greater than either you or I could here conceive, and yet shall they now be so much forgotten?

Beloved friends, if the Lord had not awakened me to believe and lay to heart these things myself, I should have remained in the dark and selfish state, and have perished for ever: but if he have truly made me sensible of them, it will constrain me to compassionate you, as well as myself. If your eyes were so far open as to see hell, and you saw your neighbours that were unconverted, dragged thither with hideous cries; though they were such as you accounted honest people on earth, and feared no such matter by themselves, such a sight would make you go home and think of it; and think again, and make you warn all about you, as that damned worldling in Luke xvi. 28. would have had his brethren warned, lest they come to that place of torment. Why, faith is a kind of sight, it is the eye of the soul, the evidence of things not seen: if I believe God, it is next to seeing; and therefore I beseech you excuse me, if I be half as earnest with you about these matters, as if I had seen them. If I must die to-morrow, and it were in my power to come again from another world, and tell you what I had seen, would you not be willing to hear me? And would you not believe, and regard what I should tell you? If I might preach one sermon to you after I am dead, and have seen what is done in the world to come, would you not have me plainly speak the truth? and would you not crowd to hear me? and would you not lay it to heart? But this must not be; God hath his appointed way of teaching you by Scripture and ministers; and he will not humour unbelievers so far, as to send men from the dead to them, and alter his established way; if any man quarrel with the sun, God will not humour him so far, as to set up a clearer light. Friends, I beseech you regard me now, as you would do if



I should come from the dead to you ; for I can give you the full assurance of the truth of what I say to you, as if I had been there and seen it with my eyes ; for it is possible for one from the dead to deceive you ; but Jesus can never deceive you ; the word of God delivered in Scripture, and sealed up by the miracles, and holy workings of the Spirit, can never deceive you. Believe this, or believe nothing. Believe, and obey this, or you are undone. Now, as ever you believe the word of God, and as ever you care for the salvation of your souls, let me beg of you this reasonable request, and I beseech you deny me not, That you would without any more delay, when you are gone from hence, remember what you heard, and enter into an earnest search of your hearts, and say unto yourselves, ‘ Is it so indeed ? Must I Turn or Die ? Must I be converted or condemned ? It is time for me then to look about me, before it be too late. O why did not I look after this till now ? Why did I venturously put off or slubber over so great a business ? Was I awake, or in my wits ? O blessed God, what a mercy is it that thou didst not cut off my life all this while, before I had any certain hope of eternal life ! Well, God forbid, that I should neglect this work any longer. What state is my soul in ? Am I converted, or am I not ? Was ever such a change, or work done upon my soul ? Have I been illuminated by the word and Spirit of the Lord, to see the odiousness of sin, the need of a Saviour, the love of Christ, and the excellencies of God and glory ? Is my heart broken, or humbled within me, for my former life ? Have I thankfully entertained my Saviour and Lord, that offered himself with pardon and life to my soul ? Do I hate my former sinful life, and the remnant of every sin that is in me ? Do I fly from them as my deadly enemies ? Do I give up myself to a life of holiness and obedience to God ? Do I love it and delight in it ? Can I truly say, that I am dead to the world, and carnal self ; and that I live for God, and the glory which he hath promised ? Hath heaven more of my estimation and resolution than earth ? And is God the dearest and highest in my soul ? Once, I am sure, I lived principally to the world and flesh, and God had nothing but some heartless services which the world could spare, and which were the leavings of the flesh. Is my

heart now turned another way? Have I a new design, and a new end, and a new train of holy affections? Have I set my hope and heart in heaven? And is it the scope and design, and bent of my heart and life, to get well to heaven, and see the glorious face of God, and live in his everlasting love and praise? And when I sin, is it against the habitual bent and design of my heart? And do I conquer all gross sins, and am I weary and willing to be rid of my infirmities? This is the state of a converted soul. And thus must it be with me, or I must perish. Is it thus with me indeed, or is it not? It is time to get this doubt resolved, before the dreadful Judge resolve it. I am not such a stranger to my own heart and life, but I may somewhat perceive whether I am thus converted or not: if I be not, it will do me no good to flatter my soul with false conceits and hopes. I am resolved no more to deceive myself, but to endeavour to know truly, off or on, whether I be converted, yea or no; that if I be, I may rejoice in it, and glorify my gracious Lord, and comfortably go on till I reach the crown; and if I am not, I may set myself to beg and seek after the grace that should convert me, and may turn without any more delay: for if I find in time that I am out of the way, by the help of Christ I may turn and be received; but if I stay till either my heart be forsaken of God in blindness and hardness, or till I be caught away by death, it is then too late. There is no place for repentance and conversion then; I know it must be now or never.'

Sirs, this is my request to you, that you will but take your hearts to task, and thus examine them, till you see, if it may be, whether you are converted or not; and if you cannot find it out by your own endeavours, go to your ministers, if they be faithful and experienced men, and desire their assistance. The matter is great, let not bashfulness, nor carelessness hinder you. They are set over you to advise you for the saving of your souls, as physicians advise you for the curing of your bodies. It undoes many thousands, that they think they are in the way to salvation, when they are not; and think that they are converted, when it is no such thing. And then when we call to them daily to turn, they go away as they came, and think that this concerns not them; for they are turned already, and hope they

shall do well enough in the way that they are in, at least if they do pick the fairest path, and avoid some of the foulest steps; when alas, all this while, they live but to the world, and flesh, and are strangers to God, and eternal life, and are quite out of the way to heaven. And all this is much, because we cannot persuade them to a few serious thoughts of their condition, and to spend a few hours in the examination of their states: is there not many a self-conceited wretch that hears me this day, that never bestowed one hour, or a quarter of an hour in all their lives, to examine their souls, and try whether they are truly converted or not? O merciful God that will care for such wretches that care no more for themselves, and that will do so much to save them from hell, and help them to heaven, who will do so little for it themselves! If all that are in the way to hell, and in the state of damnation, did but know it, they durst not continue in it. The greatest hope that the devil hath, of bringing you to damnation without a rescue, is by keeping you blindfold and ignorant of your state, and making you believe that you may do well enough in the way that you are in. If you knew that you were out of the way to heaven, and were lost for ever, if you should die as you are, durst you sleep another night in the state that you are in? Durst you live another day in it? Could you heartily laugh, or be merry in such a state? What! and not know but you may be snatched away to hell in an hour! Sure it would constrain you to forsake your former company and courses, and to betake yourselves to the ways of holiness, and the communion of the saints. Sure it would drive you to cry to God for a new heart, and to seek help of those that are fit to counsel you. There is none of you sure, that cares not for being damned. Well then, I beseech you presently make inquiry into your hearts, and give them no rest, till you find out your condition, that if it be good, you may rejoice in it and go on: and if it be bad, you may presently look about you for recovery, as men that believe they must Turn or Die. What say you, sirs, will you resolve and promise to be at thus much labour for your souls? Will you fall upon this self-examination when you come home? Is my request unreasonable? Your consciences know it is not; resolve on it then, before you stir; knowing how much



it concerneth your souls, I beseech you for the sake of that God that doth command you, at whose bar you will shortly appear, that you will not deny me this reasonable request. For the sake of those souls that must Turn or Die, I beseech you deny me not; even but to make it your business to understand your own conditions, and build upon sure ground, and know off or on, whether you are converted or no, and venture not your souls on negligent security.

But perhaps you will say, What if we should find ourselves yet unconverted, what shall we do then? This question leadeth me to my second doctrine; which will do much to the answering of it, to which I shall now proceed.

*Doct. II.* It is the promise of God, that the wicked shall live if they will but turn; unfeignedly and thoroughly turn.

The Lord here professeth, that this is it he takes pleasure in, that the wicked Turn and Live. Heaven is made as sure to the converted, as hell is to the unconverted. Turn and Live, is as certain a truth as Turn or Die. God was not bound to provide us a Saviour, nor open to us the door of hope, nor call to us to repent and turn, when once we had cast ourselves away by sin. But he hath freely done it to magnify his mercy. Sinners, there are none of you shall have cause to go home and say, I preach desperation to you. Do we use to shut up the door of mercy against you? O that you would not shut it up against yourselves! Do we use to tell you that God will have no mercy on you, though you turn and be sanctified? When did you ever hear a preacher say such a word? You that bark at the preachers of the Gospel, for desiring to keep you out of hell, and say that they preach desperation; tell me if you can, when did you ever hear any sober man say, that there is no hope for you, though ye repent and be converted? No, it is the clean contrary that we daily proclaim from the Lord, That whosoever is born again, and by faith and repentance doth become a new creature, shall certainly be saved; and so far we are from persuading you to despair of this, that we persuade you not to make any doubt of it. It is life and not death, that is the first part of our message to you; our commission is to offer salvation; certain salvation, a speedy, glorious, everlasting salvation, to every one of you; to the poorest beggar, as well as to the greatest

lord ; to the worst of you, even to the drunkards, swearers, worldlings, thieves, yea, to the despisers and reproachers of the holy way of salvation. We are commanded by our Lord and Master, to offer you a pardon for all that is past, if you will but now at last return and live ; we are commanded to beseech and entreat you to accept the offer and return ; to tell you what preparation is made by Christ, what mercy stays for you, what patience waiteth on you, what thoughts of kindness God hath towards you ; and how happy, how certainly and unspeakably happy, you may be if you will. We have indeed, also, a message of wrath and death : yea, of a twofold wrath and death ; but neither of them is our principal message : we must tell you of the wrath that is on you already, and the death that you are born under, for the breach of the law of works : but this is only to shew you the need of mercy, and provoke you to esteem the grace of the Redeemer. And we tell you nothing but the truth, which you must know : for who will seek out for physic, that knows not that he is sick ? For telling you of your misery, is not it that makes you miserable, but driveth you to seek for mercy. It is you that have brought this death upon yourselves. We tell you also of another death, even remediless, and much greater torment will fall on those that will not be converted. But as this is true, and must be told you ; so it is but the last, and saddest part of our message ; we are first to offer you mercy, if you will turn : and it is only those that will not turn nor hear the voice of mercy, that we must foretel damnation to. Will you but cast away your transgressions, delay no longer, but come away at the call of Christ, and be converted, and become new creatures, and we have not a word of damning wrath or death to speak against you. I do here in the name of the Lord of Life proclaim to you all that hear me this day, to the worst of you, to the greatest, to the oldest sinner, that you may have mercy and salvation if you will but turn. There is mercy in God, there is sufficiency in the satisfaction of Christ, the promise is free, full and universal : you may have life if you will but turn. But then, as you love your souls, remember what turning it is the Scripture speaks of. It is not to mend the old house, but to pull down all, and build anew on Christ the rock and sure foun-

dation. It is not to mend somewhat in a carnal course of life, but to mortify the flesh, and live after the Spirit. It is not to serve the flesh and the world in a more reformed way, without any scandalous disgraceful sins, and with a certain kind of religiousness; but it is to change your master, and your works, and end, and set your face a contrary way, and do all for the life that you never saw, and dedicate yourselves, and all you have to God. This is the change that must be made, if you will live.

Yourselves are witness now, that it is salvation and not damnation, that is the great doctrine I preach to you, and the first part of my message to you. Accept of this, and we shall go no further with you; for we would not so much as affright or trouble you with the name of damnation without necessity.

But if you will not be saved, there is no remedy, but damnation must take place; for there is no middle place between the two. You must have either life or death.

And we are not only to offer you life, but to shew you the grounds on which we do it, and call you to believe, that God doth mean indeed as he speaks; that the promise is true, and extendeth conditionally to you as well as others, and that heaven is no fancy, but a true felicity.

If you ask, where is our commission for this offer? Among a hundred texts of Scripture, I will shew it unto you in these few:

First, you see it here in my text, and the following verses; and Ezek. xviii. as plain as can be spoke. And in 2 Cor. v. 17—21. you have the very sum of our commission, ("If any man be in Christ he is a new creature. Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, who hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself; not imputing their trespasses to them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God; for he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him). So Mark xvi. 15, 16. "Go ye into



the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth (that is, with such a converting faith as is expressed) and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be damned." And Luke xxiv. 46, 47. "Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance (which is conversion) and remission of sins, should be preached in his name among all nations." And Acts v. 30, 31. "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree, him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." And Acts xiii. 38, 39. "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." And lest you think this offer is restrained to the Jews, see Gal. vi. 15. "For in Christ, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." And Luke xiv. 17. "Come, for all things are now ready; and ver. 23, 24.

You see by this time, that we are commanded to offer life to you all, and to tell you from God, that if you will Turn you may Live.

Here you may safely trust your souls; for the love of God is the fountain of this offer<sup>s</sup>. And the blood of the Son of God hath purchased it; the faithfulness and truth of God is engaged to make the promise good; miracles have sealed up the truth of it; preachers are sent through the world to proclaim it; the sacraments are instituted and used for the solemn delivery of the mercy offered, to them that will accept it; and the Spirit doth open the heart to entertain it, and is itself the earnest of the full possession. So that the truth of it is past controversy, that the worst of you all, and every one of you, if you will but be converted, may be saved.

Indeed, if you will needs believe you shall be saved without conversion, then you believe a falsehood; and if I should preach that to you, I should preach a lie. This were not to believe God, but the devil and your own deceitful hearts. God hath his promise of life, and the devil hath his promise

<sup>s</sup> John iii. 16.

of life. God's promise is, 'Return and Live;' the devil's is, 'Thou shalt live whether thou turn or not.' The words of God are, as I have shewed you, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven<sup>1</sup>." "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God<sup>2</sup>." "Without holiness none shall see God<sup>3</sup>." The devil's word is, 'You may be saved without being born again, and converted; you may go to heaven well enough, without being holy; God doth but frighten you; he is more merciful than to do as he saith; he will be better to you than his word.' And, alas! the greatest part of the world believe this word of the devil before the word of God, just as our first sin and misery came into the world. God saith to our first parents, 'If ye eat ye shall die;' the devil contradicts him, and saith, 'Ye shall not die;' and the woman believed the devil before God. So now the Lord saith, 'Turn or Die;' and the devil saith, 'You shall not die if you do but cry mercy at last, and give over the acts of sin, when you can practise it no longer.' And this is the word that the world believes. O heinous wickedness, to believe the devil before God!

And yet that is not the worst, but blasphemously they call this a believing and trusting in God, when they put him in the shape of satan, who was a liar from the beginning; and when they believe that the word of God is a lie, they call this a trusting God, and say they believe in him, and trust on him for salvation. Where did ever God say, that the unregenerate, unconverted, unsanctified, shall be saved? Shew such a word in Scripture, I challenge you if you can. Why, this is the devil's word, and to believe it, is to believe the devil, and is the sin that is commonly called presumption. And do you call this a believing and trusting God? There is enough in the word of God to comfort and strengthen the hearts of the sanctified. But not a word to strengthen the hands of wickedness, nor to give men the least hope of being saved, though they be never sanctified.

But if you will turn, and come into the way of mercy, the mercy of the Lord is ready to entertain you. Then trust God for salvation boldly and confidently, for he is engaged by his word to save you.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xviii. 3.<sup>2</sup> John iii. 3. 5.<sup>3</sup> Heb. xii. 14.

He will be a father to none but his children, and he will save none but those that forsake the world, the devil, and the flesh, and come into his family, to be members of his Son, and have communion with the saints. But if they will not come in, it is long of themselves ; his doors are open ; he keeps none back ; he never sent such a message as this to any of you, ' It is now too late, I will not receive thee, though thou be converted.' He might have done so, and done you no wrong, but he did not, he doth not to this day, he is still ready to receive you, if you were but ready unfeignedly, and with all your hearts, to turn. And the fullness of this truth will yet more appear in the two following doctrines, which I shall, therefore, next proceed to, before I make a farther application of this.

*Doct. III.* God taketh pleasure in men's conversion and salvation, but not in their death and damnation. He had rather they would return and live, than go on and die.

I shall first teach you how to understand this ; and then clear up the truth of it to you.

And for the first, you must observe these following things : 1. A simple willingness and complacency is the first act of the will, following the simple apprehension of the understanding, before it proceedeth to compare things together. But the choosing act of the will is a following act, and supposeth the comparing practical act of the understanding ; and these two acts may often be carried to contrary objects, without any fault at all in the person.

2. An unfeigned willingness may have divers degrees. Some things I am so far willing of, as that I will do all that lieth in my power to accomplish them. And some things I am truly willing another should do, when yet I will not do all that ever I am able to procure it, having many reasons to dissuade me therefrom : though yet I will do all that belongs to me to do.

3. The will of a ruler, as such, is manifest in making and executing laws ; but the will of a man in his simple natural capacity, or as absolute Lord of his own, is manifested in desiring or resolving of events.

4. A ruler's will, as law-giver, is, first and principally, that his law be obeyed, and not at all that the penalty be executed on any, but only on supposition that they will not



obey his laws. But a ruler's will, as judge, supposeth the law already either kept or broken. And, therefore, he resolveth on reward or punishment accordingly.

Having given you these necessary distinctions, I shall next apply them to the case in hand, in these following propositions :

1. It is in the glass of the word and creatures that in this life we must know God. And so, according to the nature of man, we ascribe to him understanding and will, removing all the imperfections that we can, because we are capable of no higher positive conceptions of him.

2. And on the same grounds we do (with the Scriptures) distinguish between the acts of God's will, as diversified from the respects, or the objects, though as to God's essence they are all one.

3. And the bolder, because that when we speak of Christ, we have the more ground for it from his human nature.

4. And thus we say, that the simple complacency, will, or love of God, is to all that is naturally or morally good, according to the nature and degree of its goodness. And so he hath pleasure in the conversion and salvation of all, which yet will never come to pass.

5. And God, as Ruler and Law-giver of the world, had so far a practical will for their salvation, as to make them a free deed of gift of Christ and life, and an act of oblivion for all their sins, so be it they will not unthankfully reject it; and to command his messengers to offer this gift to all the world, and persuade them to accept it. And so he doth all that, as Law-giver or Promiser, belongs to him to do for their salvation.

6. But yet he resolveth, as Law-giver, that they that will not Turn, shall Die. And as Judge, when their day of grace is past, he will execute that decree.

7. So that he thus unfeignedly willeth the conversion of those that never will be converted, but not as absolute Lord, with the fullest efficacious resolution, nor as a thing which he resolveth shall undoubtedly come to pass, or would engage all his power to accomplish. It is in the power of a prince to set a guard upon a murderer, to see that he shall not murder and be hanged. But if upon good reason he

forbear this, and do but send to his subjects, and warn and entreat them not to be murderers, I hope he may well say, that he would not have them murder and be hanged; he takes no pleasure in it, but rather that they forbear, and live. And if he do more for some, upon some special reason, he is not bound to do so by all. The king may well say to all the murderers and felons in the land, 'I have no pleasure in your death, but rather that you would obey my laws and live; but if you will not, I am resolved for all this, that you shall die.' The judge may truly say to the thief, or a murderer, 'Alas! man, I have no delight in thy death, I had rather thou hadst kept the law, and saved thy life, but seeing thou hast not, I must condemn thee, or else I should be unjust.' So, though God have no pleasure in your damnation, and therefore calls upon you to return and live, yet he hath pleasure in the demonstration of his own justice, and the executing his laws; and, therefore, he is for all this fully resolved, that if you will not be converted, you shall be condemned. If God were so much against the death of the wicked, as that he were resolved to do all that he can to hinder it, then no man should be condemned, whereas Christ telleth you, that few will be saved. But so far God is against your damnation, as that he will teach you and warn you, and set before you life and death, and offer you your choice, and command his ministers to entreat you not to damn yourselves, but accept his mercy, and so to leave you without excuse; but if this will not do, and if still you be unconverted, he professeth to you he is resolved of your damnation, and hath commanded us to say to you in his name, ver. 18. "O wicked man, thou shalt surely die!" And Christ hath little less than sworn it over and over, with a "Verily, verily; except ye be converted and born again, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven<sup>y</sup>." Mark that he saith, "You cannot." It is in vain to hope for it, and in vain to dream, that God is willing of it; for it is a thing that cannot be.

In a word, you see then the meaning of the text, that God, the great Law-giver of the world, doth take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn and live; though yet he be resolved that none shall live but those that turn; and as a Judge even delighteth in justice,

<sup>y</sup> Matt. xviii. 3. John iii. 3.

and manifesteth his hatred of sin, though not in their misery which they have brought upon themselves, in itself considered.

2. And for the proofs of this point, I shall be very brief in them, because I suppose you easily believe it already.

1. The very gracious nature of God proclaimed, Exodus xxxiv. 6. xx. 6. and frequently elsewhere, may assure you of this, that he hath no pleasure in your death.

2. If God had more pleasure in thy death, than in thy conversion and life, he would not have so frequently commanded thee in his word to turn, he would not have made thee such promises of life, if thou wilt but turn; he would not have persuaded thee to it by so many reasons. The tenor of his Gospel proveth the point.

3. And his commission that he hath given to the ministers of the Gospel, doth fully prove it. If God had taken more pleasure in thy damnation, than in thy conversion and salvation, he would never have charged us to offer you mercy, and to teach you the way of life, both publicly and privately; and to entreat and beseech you to turn and live; to acquaint you of your sins, and foretel you of your danger; and to do all that possibly we can for your conversion, and to continue patiently so doing, though you should hate or abuse us for our pains. Would God have done this and appointed his ordinances for your good, if he had taken pleasure in your death?

4. It is proved also by the course of his providence. If God had rather you were damned than converted and saved, he would not second his word with his works, and entice you by his daily kindness to himself, and give you all the mercies of this life, which are his means to lead you to repentance, and bring you so often under his rod, to force you into your wits. He would not set so many examples before your eyes; no, nor wait on you so patiently as he doth from day to day, and year to year. These be not signs of one that taketh pleasure in your death; if this had been his delight, how easily could he have had thee long ago in hell? How oft, before this, could he have caught thee away in the midst of thy sins, with a curse or oath, or lie in thy mouth, in thy ignorance and pride, and sensuality; when thou wert last in thy drunkenness, or last deriding the ways of God? How easily could he have stopped thy breath,



and tamed thee with his plagues, and made thee sober in another world? Alas! how small a matter is it for the Almighty to rule the tongue of the profanest railer, and tie the hands of the most malicious persecutor; or calm the fury of the bitterest of his enemies, and make them know they are but worms. If he should but frown upon thee, thou wouldst drop into thy grave. If he gave commission to one of his angels to go and destroy ten thousand sinners, how quickly would it be done? How easily can he lay thee upon the bed of languishing, and make thee lie roaring there in pain, and make thee eat the words of reproach which thou hast spoken against his servants, his word, his worship, and his holy ways; and make thee send to beg their prayers, whom thou didst despise in thy presumption? How easily can he lay that flesh under gripes and groans, and make it too weak to hold thy soul, and make it more loathsome than the dung of the earth? That flesh which now must have what it loves, and must not be displeased, and must be humoured with meat, drink, and clothes, whatsoever God says to the contrary, how quickly would the frowns of God consume it? When thou wast passionately defending thy sin, and quarrelling with them that would have drawn thee from it, and shewing thy spleen against the reprovers, and pleading for the works of darkness; how easily could God snatch thee away in a moment, and set thee before his dreadful Majesty, where thou mayst see ten thousand times ten thousand of glorious angels waiting on his throne, and call thee there to plead thy cause, and ask thee, 'What hast thou now to say against thy Creator, his truth, his servants, or his holy ways; now plead thy cause, and make the best of it thou canst. Now what canst thou say in excuse of thy sins? Now give account of thy worldliness and fleshly life, of thy time, of all thy mercies thou hast had.' O how thy stubborn heart would have melted, and thy proud looks be taken down, and thy countenance appalled, and thy stout words turned into speechless silence, or dreadful cries; if God had but set thee thus at his bar, and pleaded his own cause with thee, which thou hast here so maliciously pleaded against. How easily can he, at any time, say to thy guilty soul, 'Come away, and live in that flesh no longer, till the resurrection,' and it cannot resist? A word of his mouth,

would take off the noise of thy present life, and then all thy parts and powers would stand still ; and if he say unto thee, ' Live no longer ;' or ' Live in hell,' thou couldst not disobey.

But God hath yet done none of this ; but hath patiently forborne thee, and mercifully upheld thee, and given thee that breath which thou didst breathe out against him, and given those mercies which thou didst sacrifice to the flesh, and afforded thee that provision which thou spentest to satisfy thy greedy throat : he gave thee every minute of that time which thou didst waste in idleness, and drunkenness, or worldliness. And doth not all his patience and mercy shew that he desired not thy damnation ? Can the candle burn without the oil ? Can your houses stand without the earth to bear them ? As well as you can live one hour without the support of God. And why did he so long support thy life, but to see when thou wouldst bethink thee of the folly of thy ways, and return and live ? Will any man purposely put arms into his enemy's hands to resist him ? Or hold a candle to a murderer that is killing his children ? Or to an idle servant that plays and sleeps the while ? Surely it is to see whether thou wilt at last return and live, that God has so long waited on thee.

5. It is further proved by the sufferings of his Son that God taketh no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Would he have ransomed them from death at so dear a rate ? Would he have astonished angels and men by his condescension ? Would God have dwelt in flesh, and have come in the form of a servant, and have assumed humanity into one person with the Godhead ? And would Christ have lived a life of suffering, and died a cursed death for sinners ; if he had rather taken pleasure in their death ? Suppose you saw him but so busy in preaching and healing of them, as you find him in Mark iii. 21. ; or so long in fasting, as in Matt. iv. ; or all night in prayer, as in Luke vi. 12. ; or praying with drops of blood trickling from him instead of sweat, as Luke xxii. 44. ; or suffering a cursed death upon the cross, and pouring out his soul as a sacrifice for our sins : would you have thought these the signs of one that delighteth in the death of the wicked ?

And think not to extenuate it by saying, that it was only for his elect. For it was thy sin, and the sin of all the

world, that lay upon our Redeemer; and his sacrifice and satisfaction is sufficient for all, and the fruits of it are offered to one as well as another; but it is true that it was never the intent of his mind, to pardon and save any that would not by faith and repentance be converted. If you had seen and heard him weeping and bemoaning the state of disobedience in impenitent people, Luke xix. 41, 42., or complaining of their stubbornness, as Matt. xxiii. 37. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how oft would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not?" Or if you had seen and heard him on the cross, praying for his persecutors, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" would you have suspected that he had delighted in the death of the wicked, even of those that perish by their wilful unbelief? "When God hath so loved" (not only loved, but so loved) "the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him," (by an effectual faith,) "should not perish, but have everlasting life," I think he hath hereby proved, against the malice of men and devils, that he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but had rather that they would Turn and Live.

6. Lastly, If all this will not yet satisfy you, take his own word, that knoweth best his own mind, or at least believe his oath. But this leadeth me up to the fourth doctrine.

*Doct. IV.* The Lord hath confirmed it to us by his oath, that he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he Turn and Live; that he may leave man no pretence to question the truth of it.

If you dare question his word, I hope you dare not question his oath. As Christ hath solemnly protested, that the unregenerate and unconverted cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, in Matt. xviii. 3. John iii. 3.; so God hath sworn, that his pleasure is not in their death, but in their conversion and life. And as the apostle saith, Heb. vi. 13. 16—18. "Because he can swear by no greater than himself, he saith, As I live, &c. For men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise, the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consol-



tion, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us ; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast." If there be any man that cannot reconcile this truth with the doctrine of predestination, or the actual damnation of the wicked, that is his own ignorance ; he hath no pretence left to deny or question therefore the truth of the point in hand ; for this is confirmed by the oath of God, and therefore must not be distorted, to reduce it to other points, but doubtful points must rather be reduced to it, and certain truths must be believed to agree with it, though our shallow brains do hardly discern the agreement.

USE. I do entreat thee, if thou be an unconverted sinner that hearest these words, that thou wouldst ponder a little upon the forementioned doctrines, and bethink thyself awhile, who it is that takes pleasure in thy sin and damnation. Certainly it is not God. He hath sworn for his part, that he takes no pleasure in it. And I know it is not the pleasing of him that you intend in it. You dare not say that you drink and swear, and neglect holy duties, and quench the motions of the Spirit, to please God. That were as if you should reproach the prince, and break his laws, and seek his death, and say, you did all this to please him.

Who is it then that takes pleasure in your sin and death ? Not any that bear the image of God, for they must be like-minded to him. God knows, it is small pleasure to your faithful teachers, to see you serve your deadly enemy, and madly venture your eternal state, and wilfully run into the flames of hell. It is small pleasure to them, to see upon your souls (in the sad effects) such blindness, and hard-heartedness, and carelessness, and presumption ; such wilfulness in evil, and such uncharitableness, and stiffness, against the ways of life and peace ; they know these are marks of death, and of the wrath of God, and they know from the word of God what is like to be the end of them ; and therefore it is no more pleasure to them, than to a tender physician to see the plague-marks break out upon his patient. Alas ! to foresee your everlasting torments, and know not how to prevent them ! To see how near you are to hell, and we cannot make you believe it, and consider it ! To see how easily, how certainly you might escape, if we knew but how to make you willing ! How fair you are for

everlasting salvation, if you would but turn and do your best, and make it the care and business of your lives! But you will not do it, if our lives lay on it, we cannot persuade you to do it. We study day and night what to say to you, that may convince you, and persuade you, and yet it is undone: we lay before you the word of God, and shew you the very chapter and verse where it is written, that you cannot be saved except you be converted; and yet we leave the most of you as we find you: we hope ye will believe the word of God, though you believe not us, and that you will regard it when we shew you plain Scripture for it: but we hope in vain, and labour in vain, as to any saving change upon your hearts. And do you think that this is a pleasant thing to us? Many a time in secret prayers we are fain to complain to God with sad hearts, ‘Alas, Lord, we have spoken it to them, in thy name, but they little regard us; we have told them what thou bidst us tell them, concerning the danger of an unconverted state, but they do not believe us; we have told them that thou hast protested, “That there is no peace to the wicked<sup>z</sup>,” but the worst of them all will scarcely believe that they are wicked; we have shewed them the word, where thou hast said, “That if they live ‘after the flesh they shall die<sup>a</sup>,” but they say, they will believe in thee, when they will not believe thee: and that they will trust in thee, when they give no credit to thy word, and when they hope that the threatenings of thy word are false, they will yet call this a hoping in God; and though we shew them where thou hast said, “That when a wicked man dieth, all his hopes perish<sup>b</sup>,” yet cannot we persuade them from their deceitful hopes. We tell them what a base, unprofitable thing sin is, but they love it, and therefore will not leave it. We tell them how dear they buy their pleasure, and what they must pay for it in everlasting torment, and they bless themselves and will not believe it, but will do as the most do; and because God is merciful, they will not believe him, but will venture their souls, come on it what will. We tell them how ready the Lord is to receive them; and this does but make them delay their repentance, and be bolder in their sin. Some of them say, they purpose to repent, but they are still the same; and some say, they

<sup>z</sup> Isa. xlviii. 22. lvii. 21.<sup>a</sup> Rom. viii. 13.<sup>b</sup> Prov. xi. 7.

do repent already, while yet they are not converted from their sins. We exhort them, we entreat them, we offer them our help, but we cannot prevail with them, but they that were drunkards are drunkards still, and they that were voluptuous, flesh-pleasing wretches, are such still; and they that were worldlings are worldlings still; and they that were ignorant, proud and self-conceited, are so still. Few of them will see and confess their sin, and fewer will forsake it, but comfort themselves that all men are sinners; as if there were no difference between a converted sinner, and an unconverted. Some of them will not come near us when we are willing to instruct them, but think they know enough already, and need not our instruction: and some of them will give us the hearing, and do what they list; and most of them are like dead men that cannot feel; so that when we tell them of the matters of everlasting consequence, we cannot get a word of it to their hearts. If we do not obey them, and humour them in baptizing children of the most obstinately wicked, and giving them the Lord's supper, and doing all that they would have us, though never so much against the word of God, they will hate us, and rail at us; but if we beseech them to confess and forsake their sins, and save their souls, they will not do it. We tell them if they will but turn, we will deny them none of the ordinances of God, neither baptism to their children, nor the Lord's supper to themselves; but they will not hear us: they would have us to disobey God, damn our own souls to please them, and yet they will not turn, and save their own souls to please God. They are wiser in their own eyes than all their teachers; they rage, and are confident in their own way; and if we would never so fain we cannot change them. Lord, this is the case of our miserable neighbours, and we cannot help it; we see them ready to drop into hell, and we cannot help it; we know if they would unfeignedly turn, they might be saved; but we cannot persuade them: if we would beg it of them on our knees, we cannot persuade them to it; if we would beg it of them with tears, we cannot persuade them: and what more can we do?

These are the secret complaints and moans that many a poor minister is fain to make, and do you think that he hath any pleasure in this? Is it a pleasure to him to see you go



on in sin and cannot stop you? To see you so miserable, and cannot so much as make you sensible of it? To see you merry, when you are not sure to be an hour out of hell? To think what you must for ever suffer because you will not turn? And to think what an everlasting life of glory you wilfully despise and cast away? What sadder things can you bring to their hearts, and how can you devise to grieve them more?

Who is it then that you pleasure by your sin and death? It is none of your understanding, godly friends. Alas, it is the grief of their souls to see your misery, and they lament you many a time, when you give them little thanks for it, and when you have not hearts to lament yourselves.

Who is it then that takes pleasure in your sin? It is none but the three great enemies of God, whom you renounced in your baptism, and now are turned falsely to serve.

1. The devil, indeed, takes pleasure in your sin and death; for this is the very end of all his temptations: for this he watches night and day: you cannot devise to please him better, than to go on in sin: how glad is he when he sees thee going to the alehouse, or other sin; and when he heareth thee curse, or swear, or rail. How glad is he when he heareth thee revile the minister that would draw thee from thy sin, and help to save thee? These are his delight.

2. The wicked are also delighted in it, for it is agreeable to their nature.

3. But I know, for all this, that it is not the pleasing of the devil that you intend, even when you please him; but it is your own flesh, the greatest and most dangerous enemy, that you intend to please. It is the flesh that would be pampered, that would be pleased in meat and drink, and clothing, that would be pleased in your company, and pleased in applause and credit with the world, and pleased in sports and lusts, and idleness; this is the gulf that devoureth all. This is the very God that you serve, for the Scripture saith of such, "That their bellies are their God<sup>c</sup>."

But I beseech you stay a little and consider the business.

1. *Quest.* Should your flesh be pleased before your Maker? Will you displease the Lord, and displease your teacher, and your godly friends, and all to please your brut-

<sup>c</sup> Phil. iii. 18.

ish appetites, or sensual desires? Is not God worthy to be a ruler of your flesh; if he shall not rule it, he will not save it; you cannot in reason expect that he should.

2. *Quest.* Your flesh is pleased with your sin; but is your conscience pleased? Doth not it grudge within you, and tell you sometimes that all is not well, and that your case is not so safe as you make it to be? And should not your souls and consciences be pleased before that corruptible flesh?

3. *Quest.* But is not your flesh preparing for its own displeasure also? It loves the bait, but doth it love the hook? It loves the strong drink and sweet morsels; it loves its ease, and sport, and merriment, it loves to be rich, and well spoken of by men, and to be somebody in the world, but doth it love the curse of God? Doth it love to stand trembling before his bar, and to be judged to everlasting fire? Doth it love to be tormented with the devils for ever? Take altogether; for there is no separating sin and hell, but only by faith and true conversion; if you will keep one, you must have the other. If death and hell be pleasant to thee, no wonder then if thou go on in sin; but if they be not (as I am sure they be not) then what if sin be never so pleasant, is it worth the loss of life eternal? Is a little drink, meat, ease, the good word of sinners, or the riches of this world, to be valued above the joys of heaven? Or are they worth the sufferings of eternal fire? Sirs, these questions should be considered, before you go any farther, by every man that hath reason to consider, and that believes he hath a soul to save or lose.

Well, the Lord here sweareth that he hath no pleasure in your death, but rather that you would Turn and Live: if yet you will go on and die, rather than turn, remember it was not to please God that you did it, it was to please the world, and to please yourselves. And if men will damn themselves to please themselves, and run into endless torments for delight, and have not the wit, the heart, the grace to hearken to God or man that would reclaim them, what remedy? But they must take what they get by it, and repent in another manner, when it is too late. Before I proceed any farther in the application, I shall come to the next doctrine; which giveth a fuller ground for it.

*Doct. V.* So earnest is God for the conversion of sinners,

that he doubleth his commands and exhortations with vehemency ; “ Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die ? ”

This doctrine is the application of the former, as by a use of exhortation, and accordingly I shall handle it. Is there ever an unconverted sinner, that heareth these vehement words of God ? Is there ever a man or woman in this assembly, that is yet a stranger to the renewing, sanctifying works of the Holy Ghost ? (It is a happy assembly if it be not so with the most.) Hearken then to the voice of your Maker, and turn to him by Christ without delay. Would you know the will of God ? Why this is his will, that you presently turn. Shall the living God send so earnest a message to his creatures, and should they not obey ? Hearken then all you that live after the flesh ; the Lord that gave thee thy breath and being, hath sent a message to thee from heaven, and this is his message, “ Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die ? ” “ He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” Shall the voice of the Eternal Majesty be neglected ? If he do but terribly thunder, thou art afraid. O but this voice doth more nearly concern thee : if he do but tell thee thou shalt die to-morrow, thou wouldst not make light of it : O but this word concerneth thy life or death everlasting ! It is both a command and an exhortation : as if he had said to thee, ‘ I charge thee upon the allegiance thou owest to me thy Creator and Redeemer, that thou renounce the flesh, the world, and the devil, and turn to me that thou mayst live. I condescend to entreat thee, as thou lovest or fearest him that made thee ; as thou lovest thine own life, even thine everlasting life, Turn and Live ; as ever thou wouldst escape eternal misery, Turn, turn, “ for why wilt thou die ? ” ’ And is there a heart in man, in a reasonable creature, that can once refuse such a message, such a command, such an exhortation as this ? O what a thing then is the heart of man !

Hearken then, all that love yourselves and all that regard your own salvation. Here is the most joyful message that ever was sent to the ears of man, “ Turn ye, turn ye, why will you die ? ” You are not yet shut up under desperation. Here is mercy offered, turn and you shall have it. O sirs, with what glad and joyful hearts should you receive these tidings ! I know that this is not the first time that you have heard it : but how have you regarded it, or how



do you regard it now ? Hear, all you ignorant, careless sinners, the word of the Lord ! Hear all you worldlings, you sensual fleshpleasers, you gluttons and drunkards, and whoremongers and swearers ; you railers and backbiters, slanderers and liars ; “ Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die ? ”

Hear all you cold and outside professors, and all that are strangers to the life of Christ, and never knew the power of his cross and resurrection, and never felt your hearts warmed with his love, and live not on him as the strength of your souls ; “ Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die ? ”

Hear all that are void of the love of God, whose hearts are not towards him, nor taken up with the hopes of glory, but set more by your earthly prosperity and delights, than by the joys of heaven ; you that are religious but a little on the bye, and give God no more than your flesh can spare ; that have not denied your carnal selves, and forsaken all that you have for Christ, in the estimation and grounded resolution of your souls, but have some one thing in the world so dear to you, that you cannot spare it for Christ, if he requires it, but will rather even venture on his displeasure, than forsake it ; “ Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die ? ”

If you never heard it, or observed it before ; remember that ye were told it from the word of God this day, that if you will but turn, you may live ; and if you will not turn you shall surely die.

What now will you do sirs ? What is your resolution ? Will you turn or will you not ? Halt not any longer between two opinions : if the Lord be God follow him ; if your flesh be God, then serve it still. If heaven be better than earth and fleshly pleasures, come away then and seek a better country, and lay up your treasure where rust and moths do not corrupt, and thieves cannot break through and steal, and be awakened at last with all your might, to seek the kingdom that cannot be moved, Heb. xii. 28. And to employ your lives on a higher design, and turn the stream of your cares and labours, another way than formerly you have done ; but if earth be better than heaven, or will do more for you, or last you longer, then keep it and make your best of it, and follow it still. Sirs, are you resolved what to do ? If you be not, I will set a few more moving considerations before you, to see if reason will make you resolve.

Consider first, what preparations mercy hath made for your salvation. And what pity it is that any man should be damned after all this. The time was, when the flaming sword was in the way, and the curse of God's law would have kept thee back, if thou hadst been never so willing to turn to God: the time was, when thyself, and all the friends that thou hadst in the world, could never have procured thee the pardon of thy sins past, though thou hadst never so much lamented, and reformed them. But Christ hath removed this impediment, by the ransom of his blood. The time was, that God was wholly unreconciled, as being not satisfied for the violation of his law: but now he is so far satisfied and reconciled, as that he hath made thee a free act of oblivion, and a free deed of the gift of Christ and life, and offereth it to thee, and entreateth thee to accept it, and it may be thine if thou wilt. For, "He was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, and hath committed to us the word of actual reconciliation<sup>d</sup>." Sinners, we are commanded to do this message to you all, as from the Lord. "Come, for all things are ready<sup>e</sup>." Are all things ready, and are you unready? God is ready to entertain you and pardon all that you have done against him, if you will but come. As long as you have sinned, as wilfully as you have sinned, as heinously as you have sinned, he is ready to cast all behind his back, if you will but come. Though you have been prodigals, and run away from God, and have staid so long, he is ready even to meet you, and embrace you in his arms, and rejoice in your conversion, if you will but turn. Even the earthly worldling and swinish drunkard, may find God ready to bid him welcome, if they will but come. Doth not this turn thy heart within thee? O sinner, if thou hast a heart of flesh, and not of stone in thee, methinks this should melt it; shall the dreadful Infinite Majesty of heaven, even wait for thy returning, and be ready to receive thee who hast abused him, and forgotten him so long? Shall he delight in thy conversion, that might at any time glorify his justice in thy damnation? and doth it not yet melt thy heart within thee, and art thou not yet ready to come in? Hast thou not as much reason to be ready to come, as God hath to invite thee and bid thee welcome?

<sup>d</sup> 2 Cor. v. 18, 19.<sup>e</sup> Luke xiv. 17.

But that is not all; Christ hath done his part on the cross, and made such a way for thee to the Father that on his account thou mayst be welcome, if thou wilt come. And yet art thou not ready?

A pardon is already expressly granted, and offered thee in the Gospel. And yet art thou not ready?

The ministers of the Gospel are ready to assist thee, to instruct thee, and pronounce the absolving words of peace to thy soul; they are ready to pray for thee, and to seal up thy pardon by the administration of the holy sacrament; and yet art thou not ready?

All that fear God about thee, are ready to rejoice in thy conversion, and to receive thee into the communion of saints, and to give thee the right hand of fellowship, yea, though thou hadst been one that had been cast out of their society; they dare not but forgive where God forgiveth, when it is manifest to them by thy confession and amendment: they dare not so much as hit thee in the teeth with thy former sins, because they know that God will not upbraid thee with them. If thou hadst been never so scandalous, if thou wouldst but heartily be converted and come in, they would not refuse thee, let the world say what they would against it. And are all these ready to receive thee, and yet art thou not ready to come in?

Yea, heaven itself is ready; the Lord will receive thee into the glory of the saints, as vile a beast as thou hast been, if thou wilt but be cleansed thou mayst have a place before his throne; his angels will be ready to guard thy soul to the place of joy, if thou do but unfeignedly come in. And is God ready, the sacrifice of Christ ready, the promise ready, and pardon ready? Are ministers ready, the people of God ready, and heaven itself ready, and angels ready, and all these but waiting for thy conversion, and yet art thou not ready? What, not ready to live, when thou hast been dead so long? Not ready to come to thy right understanding; (as the prodigal is said to come to himself, Luke xv. 17.) when thou hast been besides thyself so long? Not ready to be saved, when thou art even ready to be condemned? Art thou not ready to lay hold on Christ that would deliver thee, when thou art even ready to drown, and sink into damnation? Art thou not ready to be saved from hell,



when thou art even ready to be cast remediless into it; alas! man, dost thou know what thou dost? If thou die unconverted, there is no doubt to be made of thy damnation: and thou art not sure to live an hour: and yet art thou not ready to turn, and to come in? O miserable wretch! Hast thou not served the flesh and the devil long enough! Yet hast thou not enough of sin? Is it so good to thee, or so profitable for thee? Dost thou know what it is; that thou wouldst yet have more of it? Hast thou had so many calls, and so many mercies, and so many blows, and so many examples? Hast thou seen so many laid in the grave and yet art thou not ready to let go thy sins, and come to Christ? What, after so many convictions, and gripes of conscience, after so many purposes and promises, art thou not yet ready to turn and live? O that thy eyes, thy heart were opened, to know how fair an offer is now made to thee! And what a joyful message it is that we are sent on, to bid thee come, for all things are ready.

2. Consider also, what calls thou hast to Turn and Live. How many, how loud, how earnest, how dreadful, and yet what encouraging, joyful calls.

For the principal inviter, it is God himself. He that commandeth heaven and earth, commandeth thee to Turn: and presently, without delay to Turn. He commandeth the sun to run its course, and to rise upon thee every morning; and though it be so glorious a creature, and many times bigger than all the earth, yet it obeyeth him, and faileth not one minute of its appointed time. He commandeth all the planets, and orbs of heaven, and they obey. He commandeth the sea to ebb and flow, and the whole creation to keep its course, and all they obey him. The angels of heaven obey his will, when he sends them to minister to such silly worms as we on earth<sup>e</sup>. And yet if he command but a sinner to Turn, he will not obey him: he only thinks himself wiser than God, and he cavils and pleads the cause of sin, and will not obey. If the Lord Almighty says the word, the heavens and all therein obey him: but if he call a drunkard out of an alehouse he will not obey: or if he call a worldly, fleshly sinner to deny himself, and mortify the flesh, and set his heart on a better inheritance, he will not obey.

<sup>e</sup> Heb. i. 14.

If thou hadst any love in thee, thou wouldst know the voice, and say, ‘O this is my Father’s call! How can I find in my heart to disobey?’ For the sheep of Christ do “know and hear his voice; and they follow him, and he giveth them eternal life<sup>f</sup>.” If thou hast any spiritual life and sense in thee, at least thou wouldst say, ‘This call is the dreadful voice of God, and who dare disobey?’ For saith the prophet, “The lion hath roared, who will not fear<sup>g</sup>?” God is not a man that thou shouldst dally and play with him. Remember what he said to Paul at his conversion, “It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks<sup>h</sup>.” Wilt thou yet go on and despise his word, and resist his Spirit, and stop thine ears against his call? Who is it that will have the worst of this? Dost thou know whom thou disobeyest and contendest with, and what thou art doing? It were a far wiser and easier task for thee, to contend with the thorns, and spurn them with thy bare feet, and beat them with thy bare hands, or put thy head into the burning fire. “Be not deceived, God will not be mocked<sup>i</sup>.” Whosoever else be mocked God will not; you had better play with the fire in your thatch, than with the fire of his burning wrath. “For our God is a consuming fire<sup>k</sup>.” O how unmeet a match are you for God: “It is a fearful thing to fall into his hands<sup>l</sup>.” And therefore it is a fearful thing to contend with him, or resist him. As you love your own souls take heed what you do. What will you say, if he begin in wrath to plead with you? What will you do if he take you once in hand? Will you then strive against his judgment, as now you do against his grace? Saith the Lord “Fury is not in me:” that is, I delight not to destroy; I do it as it were unwillingly but yet, “Who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me<sup>m</sup>.” It is an unequal combat for the briars and stubble to make war with the fire.

And thus you see who it is that calleth you, that should move you to hear this call, and Turn: so consider also, by what instruments, and how often, and earnestly he doth it.

<sup>f</sup> John xii. 4.<sup>g</sup> Amos iii. 8.<sup>h</sup> Acts ix. 5.<sup>i</sup> Gal. vi. 7.<sup>k</sup> Heb. xii. 29.<sup>l</sup> Heb. x. 31.<sup>m</sup> Isa. xxvii. 4. 6.

1. Every leaf of the blessed Book of God hath, as it were, a voice, and calls out unto thee. "Turn and Live; Turn or thou wilt Die." How canst thou open it, and read a leaf, or hear a chapter, and not perceive God bids thee Turn?

2. It is the voice of every sermon thou hearest; for what else is the scope and drift of all, but to call, and persuade, and entreat thee to Turn?

3. It is the voice of many a motion of the Spirit, that secretly speaks over these words again, and urgeth thee to Turn.

4. It is likely sometimes, it is the voice of thy own conscience. Art thou not sometimes convinced, that all is not well with thee; and doth not thy conscience tell thee, that thou must be a new man, and take a new course, and often call upon thee to Return?

5. It is the voice of the gracious examples of the godly. When thou seest them live a heavenly life, and fly from the sin which is thy delight, this really calls upon thee to Turn.

6. It is the voice of all the works of God. For they also are God's books that teach thee this lesson, by shewing thee his greatness, and wisdom, and goodness, and calling thee to observe them, and admire the Creator. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy works; day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night sheweth knowledge<sup>n</sup>." Every time the sun riseth upon thee it really calleth thee to Turn, as if it should say, 'What do I travel and compass the world for, but to declare to men the glory of their Maker, and to light them to do his work? And do I still find thee doing the work of sin, and sleeping out thy life in negligence?' "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light<sup>o</sup>." "The night is far spent, the day is at hand. It is now high time to awake out of sleep; let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof<sup>p</sup>." (This text was the means of Augustine's conversion.)

<sup>n</sup> Psal. xix. 1, 2.

<sup>o</sup> Eph. v. 14.

<sup>p</sup> Rom. xiii. 11—14.



7. It is the voice of every mercy thou dost possess. If thou couldst but hear, and understand them, they all cry out unto thee, Turn. Why doth the earth bear thee, but to seek and serve the Lord? Why doth it afford thee fruit, but to serve him? Why doth the air afford thee breath, but to serve him? Why do all the creatures serve thee with their labours, and their lives, but that thou mightest serve the Lord of them and thee? Why doth he give thee time, and health, and strength, but to serve him? Why hast thou meat, drink, and clothes, but for his service? Hast thou any thing which thou hast not received? And if thou didst receive them, it is reason thou shouldst bethink thee from whom, and to what end and use, thou didst receive them. Didst thou never cry to him for help in thy distress? And didst thou not then understand that it was thy part to turn and serve him if he would deliver thee? He hath done his part, and spared thee yet longer, and tried thee another and another year, and yet thou dost not Turn. You know the parable of the unfruitful fig-tree<sup>q</sup>. When the Lord had said, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground;" he was entreated to try it one year longer, and then, if it proved not fruitful, to cut it down. Christ himself there makes the application twice over, "Except ye repent, you shall all likewise perish<sup>r</sup>." How many years hath God looked for the fruits of love and holiness from thee, and hath found none? And yet hath spared thee. How many times, by thy wilful ignorance, carelessness, and disobedience, hast thou provoked justice to say, "Cut him down, why cumbereth he the ground?" And yet mercy hath prevailed, and patience hath forborne the killing, damning blow to this day. If thou hadst the understanding of a man within thee, thou wouldst know that all this calleth thee to Turn. "Dost thou think thou shalt still escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every one according to his deeds<sup>s</sup>."

8. Moreover, it is the voice of every affliction, to call

<sup>q</sup> Luke xiii. 6—9,

<sup>r</sup> Ver. 3. 5.

<sup>s</sup> Rom. ii. 3—6.

thee to make haste and Turn. Sickness and pain cry Turn. Poverty, the loss of friends, and every twig of the chastising rod, cry Turn ; and yet wilt thou not hearken to the call ? These have come near thee, and made thee feel. They have made thee groan, and can they not make thee Turn ?

9. The very frame of thy nature and being itself bespeaketh thy return. Why hast thou reason, but to rule thy flesh, and serve the Lord ? Why hast thou an understanding soul, but to learn and know his will, and do it ? Why hast thou a heart within thee that can love, fear, and desire, but that thou shouldst fear him, and love him, and desire after him ?

10. Yea, thine own engagements by promise to the Lord do call upon thee to turn and serve him. Thou hast bound thyself to him by a baptismal covenant, and renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil ; this thou hast confirmed by the profession of Christianity, and renewed it at sacraments, and in times of affliction. And wilt thou promise, and vow, and never perform, and turn to God ?

Lay all these together now, and see what should be the issue. The Holy Scriptures call upon thee to Turn ; the ministers of Christ do call upon thee to Turn ; the Spirit cries Turn ; thy conscience cries Turn ; the godly, by persuasions and examples, cry Turn ; the whole world, and all the creatures therein that are presented to thy consideration, cry Turn : the patient forbearance of God cries Turn ; all the mercies which thou receivest, cry Turn ; the rod of God's chastisement cries Turn ; thy reason, and the frame of thy nature bespeaks thy Turning ; and so do all thy promises to God, and yet art thou not resolved to Turn ?

3. Moreover, poor hard-hearted sinner, didst thou ever consider upon what terms thou standest all this while with him that calleth thee to Turn ? Thou art his own, and owest him thyself, and all thou hast : and may he not command his own ? Thou art his absolute servant, and shouldst serve no other master. Thou standest at his mercy, and thy life is in his hand ; and he is resolved to save thee upon no other terms. Thou hast many malicious spiritual enemies, that would be glad if God would but forsake thee, and let them alone with thee, and leave thee to their will ; how quickly would they deal with thee in another manner. And

thou canst not be delivered from them, but by turning unto God. Thou art fallen under his wrath by thy sin already ; and thou knowest not how long his patience will yet wait. Perhaps this is the last year ; perhaps the last day. His sword is even at thy heart, while the word is in thine ear ; and if thou turn not, thou art a dead and undone man. Were thy eyes but open to see where thou standest, even upon the brink of hell, and to see how many thousands are there already that did not turn, thou wouldst see that it is time to look about thee.

Well, sirs, look inwards now, and tell me how are your hearts affected with these offers of the Lord ? You hear what is his mind ; he delighteth not in your death. He calls to you, Turn, Turn ; it is a fearful sign, if all this move thee not, or if it do but half move thee ; and much more if it make thee more careless in thy misery, because thou hearest of the mercifulness of God. The working of the medicine will partly tell us, whether there be any hope of the cure. O what glad tidings would it be to those that are now in hell, if they had but such a message from God ! What a joyful word would it be to hear this, 'Turn and Live !' Yea, what a welcome word would it be to thyself, when thou hast felt that wrath of God but an hour ; or, if after a thousand, and ten thousand years torment, thou couldst but hear such a word from God, 'Turn and Live,' and yet wilt thou neglect it, and suffer us to return without our errand ?

Behold, sinners, we are set here as the messengers of the Lord, to set before you life and death ; what say you, which of them will you choose ? Christ standeth, as it were, by thee, with heaven in one hand and hell in the other, and offereth thee thy choice ; which wilt thou choose ? The voice of the Lord maketh the rock to tremble<sup>1</sup>. And is it nothing to hear him threaten thee, if thou wilt not turn ? Dost thou not understand and feel this voice, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye Die ?" Why, it is the voice of love, of infinite love, of thy best and kindest friend, as thou mightest easily perceive by the motion, and yet canst thou neglect it ? It is the voice of pity and compassion. The Lord seeth whither thou art going, better than thou dost, which makes him call after thee, 'Turn, turn.' He seeth what will become of thee, if

<sup>1</sup> See Psal. xxix.



thou turn not: he thinketh with himself, 'Ah! this poor sinner will cast himself into endless torment, if he do not turn: I must in justice deal with him according to my righteous law:' and therefore he calleth after thee, 'Turn, turn.' O sinner! if thou didst but know the thousandth part as well as God doth, the danger that is near you, and the misery that you are running into, we should have no more need to call after you to Turn.

Moreover, this voice that calleth to thee, is the same that hath prevailed with thousands already and called all to heaven that are now there: and they would not now for a thousand worlds that they had made light of it, and not turned to God. Now what are they possessing that turned at God's call? Now they perceive indeed that it was the voice of love, that meant them no more harm than their salvation. And if thou wilt obey the same call thou shalt come to the same happiness. There be millions that must for ever lament that they turned not, but there is never a soul in heaven that is sorry that they were converted.

Well, sirs, are you yet resolved, or are you not? Do I need to say any more to you, what will you do? Will you turn or not? Speak, man, in thy heart to God, though thou speak not out to me: speak, lest he take thy silence for a denial; speak quickly, lest he never make thee the like offer more; speak resolutely, and not waveringly; for he will have no indifferents to be his followers. Say in thy heart now, without any more delay, even before you stir hence, 'By the grace of God, I am resolved presently to turn. And because I know mine own insufficiency, I am resolved to wait on God for his grace, and follow him in his ways, and forsake my former courses and companions, and give up myself to the guidance of the Lord.'

Sirs, you are not shut up in the darkness of heathenism, nor in the desperation of the damned. Life is before you, and you may have it on reasonable terms if you will; yea, on free-cost if you will accept it. The way of God lieth plain before you, the church is open to you, and you may have Christ, pardon and holiness, if you will. What say you? Will you or will you not? If you say nay, or say nothing, and still go on, God is witness, and this congregation is witness, and your own consciences are witness, how

fair an offer you had this day. Remember you might have Christ, and you would not. Remember, when you have lost it, that you might have had eternal life, as well as others, and would not: and all this because you would not Turn!

But let us come to the next Doctrine, and hear your reasons.

*Doct. VI.* The Lord condescendeth to reason the case with unconverted sinners, and to ask them why they will die.

A strange disputation it is, both as to the controversy; and as to the disputants.

1. The controversy or question propounded to dispute of, is, Why wicked men will damn themselves? Or, Whether they will die rather than turn? Whether they have any sufficient reason for so doing?

2. The disputants are God and man: the most holy God, and wicked, unconverted sinners.

Is it not a strange thing which God doth seem here to suppose, that any man should be willing to die, and be damned; yea, that this should be the case of all the wicked: that is, of the greatest part of the world? But you will say, 'This cannot be; for nature desireth the preservation and felicity of itself, and the wicked are more selfish than others, and not less; and therefore how can any man be willing to be damned?'

To which I answer, 1. It is a certain truth, that no man can be willing of any evil, as evil, but only as it hath some appearance of good; much less can any man be willing to be eternally tormented. Misery, as such, is desired by none. 2. But yet for all that, it is most true, which God here teacheth us, that the cause why the wicked die and are damned, is, because they will die and be damned. And this is true in several respects.

1. Because they will go the way that leads to hell, though they are told by God and man whether it goes and where it ends. And though God hath so often professed in his word, that if they hold on in that way they shall be condemned: and that they shall not be saved unless they Turn. "There is no peace (saith the Lord) unto the wicked."<sup>u</sup> "The way of peace they know not; there is no judgment in their going; they have made them crooked paths, whosoever goeth

<sup>u</sup> Isa. xlviii. 22. lvii. 21.

therein shall not know peace \*.” They have the word, and the oath of the living God for it, that if they will not turn, they shall not enter into his rest. And yet wicked they are, and wicked they will be, let God and man say what they will: fleshly they are, and fleshly they will be; worldlings they are, and worldlings they will be, though God hath told them, that “the love of the world is enmity to God; and that if any man love the world, (in that measure) the love of the Father is not in him †.” So that consequentially these men are willing to be damned, though not directly: they are willing of the way to hell, and love the certain cause of their torment, though they be not willing of hell itself, and do not love the pain which they must endure.

Is not this the truth of your case, sirs? You would not burn in hell, but you will kindle the fire by your sins, and cast yourselves into it; you would not be tormented with devils in hell, but you will do that which will certainly procure it in despite of all that can be said against it. It is just as if you would say, ‘I will drink this ratsbane, or other poison, but yet I would not die. I will cast myself headlong from the top of a steeple, but yet I will not kill myself. I will thrust my knife into my heart, but yet I will not take away my life. I will put this fire into the thatch of my house, but yet I will not burn it.’ Just so it is with wicked men; they will be wicked, and live after the flesh and the world, and yet they would not be damned. But do you not know, that the means do lead unto the end? and that God hath, by his righteous law, concluded, that ye must repent or perish? He that will take poison may as well say, ‘I will kill myself,’ for it will prove no better in the end: though perhaps he loved it for the sweetness of the sugar that was mixed with it, and would not be persuaded it was poison, but that he might take it and do well enough; but it is not his conceits and confidence that will save his life. So if you will be drunkards, or fornicators, or worldlings, or live after the flesh, you may as well say plainly, ‘We will be damned;’ for so you shall be unless you turn. Would you not rebuke the folly of a thief or murderer that would say, ‘I will steal or kill, but I will not be hanged;’ when he knows, that if he do the one, the judge in justice will see that the

\* Isa. lix. 8.

† James iv. 4. John ii. 15.



other be done. If he says, 'I will steal and murder,' he may as well say plainly, 'I will be hanged;' so if you will go on in a carnal life, you may as well say plainly, 'We will go to hell.'

2. Moreover, the wicked will not use those means without which there is no hope of their salvation: he that will not eat, may as well say plainly he will not live, unless he can tell how to live without meat. He that will not go his journey, may as well say plainly he will not come to the end. He that falls into the water, and will not come out, nor suffer another to help him out, may as well say plainly, he will be drowned. So if you be carnal and ungodly, and will not be converted, nor use the means by which you should be converted, but think it more ado than needs, you may as well say plainly, you will be damned. For if you have found out a way to be saved without conversion, you have done that which was never done before.

3. Yea, this is not all, but the wicked are unwilling even of salvation itself. Though they may desire somewhat which they call by the name of heaven, yet heaven itself, considered in the true nature of the felicity, they desire not: yea, their hearts are quite against it. Heaven is a state of perfect holiness, and of continual love and praise to God, and the wicked have no heart to this. The imperfect love, praise, and holiness which is here to be obtained, they have no mind of; much less of that which is so much greater: the joys of heaven are of so pure and spiritual a nature, that the heart of the wicked cannot truly desire them.

So that by this time you may see on what ground it is that God supposeth that the wicked are willing of their own destruction: they will not Turn, though they must Turn or Die. They will rather venture on certain misery, than be converted; and then to quiet themselves in their sins, they will make themselves believe, that they shall nevertheless escape.

2. And as the controversy is matter of wonder (that ever men should be such enemies to themselves, as wilfully to cast away their souls), so are the disputants too. That God should stoop so low, as thus to plead the case with man; and that man should be so strangely obstinate as to need all

this in so plain a case ; yea, and to resist all this, when their own salvation lieth upon the issue.

No wonder, if they will not hear us that are men, when they will not hear the Lord himself: as God saith, when he sent the prophet to the Israelites, "The house of Israel will not hearken unto thee: for they will not hearken unto me: For all the house of Israel are impudent, and hard-hearted <sup>a</sup>." No wonder, if they can plead against a minister, or a godly neighbour, when they will plead against the Lord himself, even against the plainest passages of his word, and think they have reason on their side. 'When they weary the Lord with their words,' they say, "Wherein have we wearied him <sup>a</sup>?" The priests that despised his name, durst ask, "Wherein have we despised thy name." And when they "polluted his altar, and made the tables of the Lord contemptible," they durst say, "Wherein have we polluted thee <sup>b</sup>?" But "Wo unto him (saith the Lord) that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou <sup>c</sup>?"

*Quest.* 'But why is it that God will reason the case with man?'

*Ans.* 1. Because that man, being a reasonable creature, is accordingly to be dealt with; and by reason to be persuaded and overcome. God hath therefore endowed them with reason, that they might use it for him. One would think a reasonable creature should not go against the clearest and greatest reason in the world, when it is set before him.

2. At least men shall see that God did require nothing of them that was unreasonable, but that whatever he commandeth them, and whatever he forbiddeth them, he hath all the right reason in the world on his side, and they have good reason to obey him, but none to disobey. And thus even the damned shall be forced to justify God, and confess that it was but reason that they should have turned to him, and they shall be forced to condemn themselves, and confess that they have little reason to cast away themselves by the neglecting of his grace in the day of their visitation.

*USE.* Look up your best and strongest reasons sinners, if you will make good your way: you see now with whom you have to deal. What sayst thou unconverted, sensual

<sup>a</sup> Ezek. iii. 7.

<sup>a</sup> Mal. ii. 7.

<sup>b</sup> Mal. vi. 1. 7.

<sup>c</sup> Isa. xlv. 9.

wretch? Darest thou venture upon a dispute with God: art thou able to confute him? Art thou ready to enter the lists? God asketh thee, 'Why wilt thou die?' Art thou furnished with a sufficient answer? Wilt thou undertake to prove that God is mistaken, and that thou art in the right? O what an undertaking is that! Why either he or you is mistaken, when he is for your conversion, and you are against it. He calls upon you to turn, and you will not: he bids you do it presently, even to-day, while it is called to-day, and you delay, and think it time enough hereafter. He saith, it must be a total change, and you must be holy and new creatures, and born again; and you think that less may serve the turn, and that it is enough to patch up the old man, without becoming new. Who is in the right now, God or you? God calleth on you to turn, and to live a holy life, and you will not; by your disobedient lives it appears you will not. If you will, why do you not? Why have you not done it all this while? And why do you not fall upon it yet? Your wills have the command of your lives. We may certainly conclude, that you are unwilling to turn, when you do not turn. And why will you not? Can you give any reason for it, that is worthy to be called a reason?

I that am but a worm, your fellow-creature, of a shallow capacity, dare challenge the wisest of you all to reason the case with me, while I plead my Maker's cause, and I need not be discouraged, when I know I plead but the cause that God pleadeth, and contend for him that will have the best at last. Had I but these two general grounds against you, I am sure that you have no good reason on your side.

1. I am sure it can be no good reason, which is against the God of truth and reason; it cannot be light that is contrary to the sun. There is no knowledge in any creature, but what it had from God; and therefore none can be wiser than God. It were damnable presumption for the highest angel to compare with his Creator, what is it then for a lump of dirt, an ignorant sot, that knoweth not himself, nor his own soul; that knoweth but little of the things which he seeth, yea, that is more ignorant than many of his neighbours, to set himself against the wisdom of the Lord? It is one of the fullest discoveries of the horrible wickedness of carnal men, and the stark madness of such who sin, that so



silly a mole dare contradict his Maker, and call in question the word of God: yea, that those people in our parishes, that are so beastly ignorant, that they cannot give us a reasonable answer, concerning the very principles of religion, and yet so wise in their own conceit, that they dare question the plainest truths of God, yea, contradict them, and cavil against them, when they can scarce speak sense, and will believe them no farther than agreeth with their foolish wisdom.

2. And as I know that God must needs be in the right, so I know the case is so palpable and gross which he pleadeth against, that no man can have reason for it. Is it possible that a man can have any good reason to break his master's laws, and reason to dishonour the Lord of glory, and reason to abuse the Lord that bought him? Is it possible that a man can have any good reason to damn his own immortal soul? Mark the Lord's question, "Turn ye, turn ye, Why will ye die? Is eternal death a thing to be desired? Are you in love with hell? What reason have you wilfully to perish? If you think you have some reason to sin, should you not remember that "death is the wages of sin<sup>d</sup>?" And think whether you have any reason to undo yourselves, body and soul for ever? You should not only ask whether you love the adder, but whether you love the sting. It is such a thing for a man to cast away his everlasting happiness, and to sin against God, that no good reason can be given for it; but the more any one pleads for it, the more mad he sheweth himself to be. Had you a lordship or a kingdom offered to you, for every sin that you commit, it were not reason but madness to accept it. Could you by every sin obtain the highest thing on earth that flesh desireth, it were of no considerable value to persuade you in reason to commit it. If it were to please your greatest and dearest friends, or obey the greatest prince on earth, or to save your lives, or to escape the greatest earthly misery, all these are of no consideration to draw a man in reason to the committing of one sin. If it were a right hand, or a right eye that would hinder your salvation, it would be the most gainful way to cast it away, rather than go to hell to save it. For there is no saving a part, when you lose the whole. So exceedingly great are the matters of eternity, that nothing in this world

<sup>d</sup> Rom. vi. 23.

deserveth once to be named in comparison with them, nor can any earthly thing, though it were life, and crowns, and kingdoms, be a reasonable excuse for matters of so high and everlasting consequence. A man can have no reason to cross his ultimate end. Heaven is such a thing, that if you lose it, nothing can supply the want, or make up the loss. And hell is such a thing, that if you suffer it, nothing can remove your misery, or give you ease and comfort. And therefore nothing can be a valuable consideration to excuse you for neglecting your own salvation. For saith our Saviour, "What shall it profit a man to win all the world and lose his own soul<sup>e</sup>."

O, sirs! did you but know what matters they are, we are now speaking to you of! The saints in heaven have other kind of thoughts of these things. If the devil could come to them that live in the sight and love of God, and should offer them a cup of ale, or a whore, or merry company, or sport to entice them away from God, and glory, I pray you tell me, how do you think they would entertain the motion. Nay, if he should offer them to be kings on the earth, do you think this would entice them down from heaven? O, with what hatred, and holy scorn would they disdain, and reject the motion; and why should not you do so that have heaven opened to your faith, if you had but faith to see it? There is never a soul in hell, but knows by this time, that it was a mad exchange to let go heaven for fleshly pleasure: and that it is not a little mirth, or pleasure, or worldly riches or honour, or the good will, or the word of men that will quench hell-fire, or make him a saver that loseth his soul. O if you had heard what I believe, if you had seen what I believe, and that on the credit of the word of God, you would say, there can be no reason to warrant a man to damn his soul; you durst not sleep quietly another night, before you had resolved to Turn and Live.

If you see a man put his hand into the fire till it burn off, you marvel at it; but this is a thing that a man may have reason for, as Bishop Cranmer had when he burnt off his hand for subscribing to Popery. If you see a man cut off a leg, or an arm, it is a sad sight; but this is a thing a man may have good reason for; as many a man doth to save his

<sup>e</sup> Mark viii. 36.

life. If you see a man give his body to be burnt to ashes, and to be tormented with strappadoes and racks, and refuse deliverance when it is offered ; this is a hard case to flesh and blood. But this a man hath good reason for ; as you may see in Heb. xi. 33—36. And as many a hundred martyrs have done. But for a man to forsake the Lord that made him, and for a man to run into the fire of hell, when he is told of it, and entreated to turn, that he may be saved ; this is a thing that can have no reason in the world, that is reason indeed, to justify, or excuse it. For heaven will pay for the loss of any thing that we can lose to get it, or for any labour which we bestow for it. But nothing can pay for the loss of heaven.

I beseech you now, let his word come nearer to your hearts. As you are convinced you have no reason to destroy yourselves, so tell me what reason you have to refuse to turn, and live to God ; what reason hath the veriest worldling, or drunkard, or ignorant, careless sinner of you all, why you should not be as holy as any you know, and be as careful for your souls as any other ? Will not hell be as hot to you as to others ? Should not your own souls be as dear to you, as theirs to them ? Hath not God as much authority over you ? Why then will ye not become a sanctified people, as well as they ?

O sirs, when God bringeth down the matter to the very principles of nature, and shews you that you have no more reason to be ungodly, than you have to damn your own souls : if yet you will not understand and Turn, it seems a desperate case that you are in.

And now either you have reason for what you do, or you have not. If not, will you go on against reason itself ? Will you do that which you have no reason for ? But if you think you have, produce them, and make the best of your matter, reason the case a little while with your fellow-creature, which is far easier than to reason the case with God. Tell me, man, here, before the Lord, as if thou wert to die this hour, why shouldst thou not resolve to turn this day, before thou stir from the place thou standest in ? What reason hast thou to deny, or to delay ? Hast thou any reason that satisfieth thine own conscience for it ? Or any that thou darest own and plead at the bar of God ? If thou



hast, let us hear them, bring them forth, and make them good. But alas ! what poor stuff, what nonsense, instead of reasons, do we daily hear from ungodly men ? But for their necessity, I should be ashamed to name them.

1. One saith, ‘ If none shall be saved but such converted and sanctified ones as you talk of, heaven would be but empty ; then God help a great many.’

*Ans.* What, it seems you think God doth not know, or else that he is not to be believed : measure not all by yourself ; God hath thousands and millions of his sanctified ones ; but yet they are few in comparison of the world, as Christ himself hath told us in Matt. vii. 13, 14. and Luke xii. 32. It better beseems you to make that use of this truth which Christ teacheth you ; “ Strive to enter in at the straight gate ; for straight is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it : but wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat <sup>f</sup>.” “ And fear not little flock, (saith Christ to his sanctified ones,) for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom <sup>g</sup>.”

*Object.* 2. ‘ I am sure if such as I go to hell, we shall have store of company.’

*Ans.* And will that be any ease or comfort to you ? Or do you think you may not have company enough in heaven ? Will you be undone for company ? Or will you not believe that God will execute his threatenings, because there are so many that are guilty ? All these are silly, unreasonable conceits.

*Object.* 3. ‘ But all men are sinners, even the best of you all.’

*Ans.* But all are not unconverted sinners. The godly live not in gross sins ; and their very infirmities are their grief and burden, which they daily long, and pray, and strive to be rid of. Sin hath not dominion over them.

*Object.* 4. ‘ I do not see that professors are any better than other men : they will overreach and oppress, and are as covetous as any.’

*Ans.* Whatever hypocrites are, it is not so with those that are sanctified. God hath thousands and ten thousands that are otherwise. Though the malicious world doth ac-

<sup>f</sup> Luke xiii. 22—24.

<sup>g</sup> Luke xii. 23.

cuse them of what they can never prove, and of that which never entered into their hearts. And commonly they charge them with heart-sins, which none can see but God; because they can charge them with no such wickedness in their lives, as they are guilty of themselves.

*Object.* 5. ‘But I am no whoremonger, nor drunkard, nor oppressor; and therefore why should you call upon me to be converted?’

*Ans.* As if you were not born after the flesh, and had not lived after the flesh, as well as others. Is it not as great a sin, as any of these, for a man to have an earthly mind, and to love the world above God, and to have a faithless, unhumbled heart? Nay, let me tell you more, that many persons that avoid disgraceful sins, are fast glued to the world, and as much slaves to the flesh, and as strange to God, and averse to heaven in their more civil course, as others are in their more shameful, notorious sins.

*Object.* 6. ‘But I mean nobody any harm, or do no harm; and why then should God condemn me?’

*Ans.* Is it no harm to neglect the Lord that made thee, and the work for which thou camest into the world, and prefer the creature before the Creator, and neglect grace that is daily offered thee? It is the depth of thy sinfulness, to be insensible of it. The dead feel not that they are dead. If once thou wert made alive, thou wouldst see more amiss in thyself, and marvel at thyself for making so light of it.

*Object.* 7. ‘I think you will make men mad under a pretence of converting them: it is enough to rack the brains of simple people, to muse so much on matters too high for them.’

*Ans.* 1. Can you be madder than you are already? Or at least, can there be a more dangerous madness, than to neglect your everlasting welfare, and wilfully undo yourselves?

2. A man is never well in his wits till he be converted; he neither knows God, nor sin, nor Christ, nor the world, nor himself, nor what his business is on the earth, so as to set himself about it, till he be converted. The Scripture saith that the wicked are unreasonable men<sup>h</sup>; and “that the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God<sup>i</sup>,” and Luke xv. 17. it is said of the prodigal, “that when he came to

<sup>h</sup> 2 Thess. iii. 2.

<sup>i</sup> 1 Cor. i. 20.

himself," he resolved to Return. It is a wise world when men will disobey God, and run to hell for fear of being out of their wits.

3. What is there in the work that Christ calls you to, that should drive a man out of his wits? Is it the loving of God, and calling upon him, and comfortable thinking of the glory to come, and the forsaking of our sins, and the loving of one another, and delighting ourselves in the service of God? Are these such things as should make men mad?

4. And whereas you say, that these matters are too high for us, you accuse God himself for making this our work, and giving us his word, and commanding all that will be blessed, to meditate in it day and night. Are the matters which we are made for, and which we live for, too high for us to meddle with? This is plainly to unman us, and to make beasts of us, as if we were like to them that must meddle with no higher matters than what belongeth to flesh and earth, if heaven be too high for you to think on, and to provide for, it will be too high for you ever to possess.

5. If God should sometimes suffer any weak-headed person to be distracted by thinking of eternal things; this is because they misunderstand them, and run without a guide. And of the two, I had rather be in the case of such an one, than of the mad, unconverted world, that take their distraction to be their wisdom.

*Object.* 8. 'I do not think that God doth care so much what men think, or speak, or do, as to make so great a matter of it.'

*Answ.* It seems then, you take the word of God to be false, and then what will you believe? But your own reason might teach you better, if you believe not the Scriptures: for you see God doth not set so light by us, but that he vouchsafed to make us, and still preserveth us, and daily upholdeth us, and provideth for us; and will any wise man make a curious frame for nothing? Will you make, or buy a clock, or a watch, and daily look to it, and not care whether it go true or false? Surely if you believe not a particular eye of Providence observing your hearts and lives, you cannot believe or expect any particular Providence to observe your wants and troubles, to relieve you. And if God had so little cared for you, as you imagine, you would



never have lived till now : a hundred diseases would have striven which should first destroy you. Yea, the devil would have haunted you, and fetched you away alive, as the great fishes devour the less ; and as ravenous beasts and birds devour others. You cannot think that God made man for no end or use : and if he made him for any, it was sure for himself. And can you think he cares not whether his end be accomplished, and whether we do the work that we are made for ?

Yea, by this atheistical objection, you make God to have made, and upheld all the world, in vain. For what are all other lower creatures for, but for man ? What doth the earth but bear us, and nourish us ? And the beasts do serve us with their labours and lives : and so of the rest. And hath God made so glorious an habitation, and set man to dwell in it, and made all his servants ; and now doth he look for nothing at his hands ? Nor care how he thinks, or speaks, or lives ? This is most unreasonable.

*Object. 9.* ' It was a better world when men did not make so much ado in religion.'

*Ans.* It hath ever been the custom to praise the time past. That world that you speak of, was wont to say, It was a better world in our forefathers' days, and so did they of their forefathers. This is but an old custom, because we all feel the evil of our own times, but we see not that which was before us.

2. Perhaps you speak as you think : worldlings think the world is at the best, when it is agreeable to their minds ; and when they have most mirth and worldly pleasure. And I doubt not but the devil, as well as you, would say, that then it was a better world ; for then he had more service, and less disturbance ; but the world is best, when God is most loved, regarded and obeyed. And how else will you know when the world is good or bad, but by this ?

*Object. 10.* ' There are so many ways and religions, that we know not which to be of ; and therefore we will be even as we are.'

*Ans.* Because there are many, will you be of that way that you may be sure is wrong ? None are farther out of the way, than worldly, fleshly, unconverted sinners. For they do not err in this or that opinion, as many sects do ;

but in the very scope and drift of their lives. If you were going a journey that your life lay on, would you stop or turn again, because you meet some cross-ways, or because you see some travellers go the horse-way, and some the foot-way, and some perhaps break over the hedge, yea, and some miss the way? Or would you not rather be more careful to inquire the way? If you have some servants that know not how to do your work right, and some that are unfaithful, would you take it well at any of the rest, that would therefore be idle and do you no service, because they see the rest so bad?

*Object.* 11. 'I do not see that it goes any better with those that are so godly, than with other men. They are as poor, and in as much trouble as others.

*Answ.* And perhaps in much more, when God sees it meet. They take not an earthly prosperity for their wages. They have laid up their treasure and hopes in another world, or else they are not Christians indeed. The less they have, the more is behind: and they are content to wait till then.

*Object.* 12. 'When you have said all that you can, I am resolved to hope well, and trust in God, and do as well as I can, and not make so much ado.'

*Answ.* 1. Is that doing as well as you can, when you will not turn to God, but your heart is against his holy and diligent service? It is as well as you will, indeed: but that is your misery.

2. My desire is that you should hope and trust in God. But for what is it that you will hope? Is it to be saved, if you turn and be sanctified? For this you have God's promise; and therefore hope for it, and spare not; but if you hope to be saved without conversion and a holy life, this is not to hope in God, but in satan, or yourselves; for God hath given you no such promise, but told you the contrary; but it is satan and self-love that made you such promises, and raised you to such hopes.

Well, if these, and such as these, be all you have to say against conversion, and a holy life, your all is nothing, and worse than nothing; and if these, and such as these, seem reasons sufficient to persuade you to forsake God, and cast yourselves into hell, the Lord deliver you from such reasons,

and from such blind understandings, and from such senseless, hardened hearts. Dare you stand to every one of these reasons at the bar of God? Do you think it will then serve your turn, to say, 'Lord I did not turn, because I had so much to do in the world, or, because I did not like the lives of some professors, or, because I saw men of so many minds?' O how easily will the light of that day confound and shame such reasons as these! Had you the world to look after? Let the world which you served, now pay you your wages, and save you if it can! Had you not a better world to look after first? And were ye not commanded to seek first God's kingdom and righteousness, and promised, that other things should be added to you<sup>k</sup>? And were you not told, "that godliness was profitable to all things, having the promise of this life, and of that which is to come"<sup>l</sup>? Did the sins of professors hinder you? You should rather have been the more heedful, and learned by their falls to beware; and have been the more careful, and not the more careless; it was the Scripture and not their lives, that was your rule. Did the many opinions of the world hinder you? Why, the Scripture that was your rule, did teach you but one way, and that was the right way; if you had followed that, even in so much as was plain and easy, you would never have miscarried. Will not such answers as these confound and silence you? If these will not, God hath those that will. When he asketh the man, Matt. xxii. 12. "Friend how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?" That is, what dost thou in my church amongst professed Christians, without a holy heart and life? What answer did he make? Why, the text saith, "He was speechless," he had nothing to say. The clearness of the case, and the majesty of God, will then easily stop the mouths of the most confident of you, though you will not be put down by any thing that we can say to you now, but will make good your cause, be it never so bad. I know already, that never a reason that now you can give me, will do you any good at last, when your case must be opened before the Lord and all the world.

Nay, I scarce think that your own consciences are well satisfied with your reasons. For if they are, it seems then you have not so much as a purpose to repent: but if you do

<sup>k</sup> Matt. vi. 33.

<sup>l</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 8.



but purpose to repent, it seems you do not put much confidence in your reasons which you bring against it.

What say you, unconverted sinners? Have you any good reason to give, why you should not Turn, and presently Turn with all your hearts? Or, will you go to hell in despite of reason itself? Bethink you what you do, in time, for it will shortly be too late to bethink you. Can you find any fault with God, or his work, or wages? Is he a bad master? Is the devil whom you serve a better? Or is the flesh a better? Is there any harm in a holy life? Is a life of worldliness and ungodliness better? Do you think in your conscience, that it would do you any harm to be converted, and live a holy life? What harm can it do you? Is it harm to you to have the Spirit of Christ within you? And to have a cleansed, purified heart? If it be bad to be holy, why doth God say, "Be ye holy, for I am holy<sup>n</sup>?" Is it evil to be like God? Is it not said, that "God made man in his own image?" Why, this holiness is his image: this Adam lost, and this Christ by his word and Spirit would restore to you, as he doth to all that he will save. Why were you baptized into the Holy Ghost; and why do you baptize your children into the Holy Ghost, as your Sanctifier, if ye will not be sanctified by him, but think it a hurt to be sanctified? Tell me truly, as before the Lord, though you are loath to live a holy life, had you not rather die in the case of those that do so, than of others? If you were to die this day, had you not rather die in the case of a converted man, than of the unconverted? Of a holy and heavenly man, than of a carnal, earthly man? And would you not say as Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his<sup>o</sup>?" And why will you not now be of the mind that you will be of then? First or last you must come to this; either to be converted, or to wish you had been, when it is too late.

But what is it you are afraid of losing if you Turn? Is it your friends? You will but change them: God will be your friend, and Christ and the Spirit will be your friend, and every Christian will be your friend. You will get one friend that will stand in more stead than all the friends in the world could have done. The friends you lose would

<sup>n</sup> 1 Pet. i. 15, 16. Lev. xx. 7.

<sup>o</sup> Numb. xxiii. 10.

have but enticed you to hell, but could not have delivered you; but the friend you get will save you from hell, and bring you to his own eternal rest.

Is it your pleasures that you are afraid of losing? You think you shall never have a merry day again, if once you be converted. Alas! that you should think it a greater pleasure to live in foolish sports and merriments, and please your flesh, than live in the believing thoughts of glory, and in the love of God, and in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, in which the state of grace consisteth. If it be a greater pleasure to you to think of your lands and inheritance, (if you were lord of all the country,) than it is to a child to play with pins; why should it not be a greater joy to you to think of the kingdom of heaven being yours, than all the riches or pleasures of the world? As it is but foolish childishness that makes children so delight in gawds, that they would not leave them for all your lands; so it is but foolish worldliness, and fleshliness, and wickedness, that makes you so much delight in your houses, and lands, and meat, and drink, and ease, and honour, as that you would not part with them for heavenly delights. But what will you do for pleasure when these are gone? Do you not think of that? When your pleasures end in horror, and go out with a stinking snuff, the pleasures of the saints are then at the best. I have had myself but a little taste of the heavenly pleasures, in the forethoughts of the blessed approaching day, and in the present persuasions of the love of God in Christ; but I have taken too deep a draught of earthly pleasures, (so that you may see, if I be partial, it is on your side,) and yet I must profess from that little experience, that there is no comparison. There is more joy to be had in a day (if the sun of life shine clear upon us), in the state of holiness, than in a whole life of sinful pleasure; I had "rather be a door-keeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. A day in his courts is better than a thousand" any where else<sup>p</sup>. The mirth of the wicked is like the laughter of a madman, that knows not his own misery: and therefore Solomon saith of such laughter, "it is mad, and of mirth, what doth it?—It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting; for that is

<sup>p</sup> Psal. lxxxiv. 10.

the end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart. Sorrow is better than laughter; for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than to hear the song of fools; for as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool<sup>a</sup>." All the pleasure of fleshly things, is but like the scratching of a man that hath the itch; it is his disease that makes him desire it: and a wise man had rather be without his pleasure, than be troubled with his itch. Your loudest laughter is but like that of a man that is tickled, he laughs when he hath no cause of joy. And it is a wiser thing for a man to give all his estate and his life, to be tickled to make him laugh, than for you to part with the love of God, and the comforts of holiness, and the hopes of heaven, and to cast yourselves into damnation, that you may have your flesh tickled with the pleasure of sin for a little while. Judge as you are men whether this be a wise man's part. It is your carnal, unsanctified nature that makes a holy life seem grievous to you, and a course of sensuality seem more delightful. If you will but Turn, the Holy Ghost will give you another nature and inclination, and then it will be more pleasant to you to be rid of your sin, than now it is to keep it; and you will then say that you knew not what a comfortable life was till now, and that it was never well with you, till God and holiness were your delight.

*Quest.* ' But how cometh it to pass, that men should be so unreasonable in the matters of salvation? They have wit enough in other matters; what makes them so loath to be converted, that there should need so many words in so plain a case; and all will not do, but the most will live and die unconverted?'

*Ans.* To name them only in few words, the causes are these.

1. Men are naturally in love with earth and flesh, they are born sinners, and their nature hath an enmity to God and godliness, as the nature of a serpent hath to a man. And when all that we can say, goes against the habitual inclinations of their natures, no marvel if it little prevail.



2. They are in darkness and know not the very things that they hear. Like a man that was born blind, and hears a high commendation of the light: but what will hearing do, unless he sees it? They know not what God is, nor what is the power of the cross of Christ, nor what the Spirit of holiness is, nor what it is to live in love by faith. They know not the certainty, and suitableness, and excellency of the heavenly inheritance. They know not what conversion, and a holy mind and conversation are, even when they hear of them. They are in a mist of ignorance, they are lost and bewildered in sin, like a man that hath lost himself in the night, and knows not where he is, nor how to come to himself again, till the daylight do recover him.

3. They are wilfully confident that they need no conversion, but some partial amendment; and that they are in the way to heaven already, and are converted, when they are not. And if you meet a man that is quite out of his way, you may long enough call on him to turn back again, if he will not believe you that he is out of the way.

4. They are become slaves to their flesh, and drowned in the world to make provision for it. Their lusts, and passions, and appetites have distracted them, and got such a hand over them, that they cannot tell how to deny them, or how to mind any thing else. So that the drunkard saith, 'I love a cup of good drink and cannot forbear it.' The glutton saith, 'I love good cheer, and I cannot forbear.' The fornicator saith, 'I love to have my lusts fulfilled, and I cannot forbear.' And the gamester loveth to have his sports, and he cannot forbear. So that they are even become captivated slaves to their flesh, and their very wilfulness is become an impotency, and what they would not do, they say they cannot. And the worldling is so taken up with earthly things, that he hath neither heart, nor mind, nor time for heavenly; but as in Pharaoh's dream, the lean kine did eat up the fat ones; so this lean and barren earth do eat up all the thoughts of heaven.

5. Some are so carried away by the stream of evil company, that they are possessed with hard thoughts of a godly life, by hearing them speak against it: or at least they think they may venture to do as they see most do; and so they hold on in their sinful ways. And when one is cut off and

cast into hell, and another snatched away from among them, to the same condemnation, it doth not much daunt them, because they see not whither they are gone. Poor wretches ! They hold on in their ungodliness for all this ; for they little know that their companions are now lamenting it in torments. In Luke xvi. the rich man in hell would fain have had one to warn his five brethren, lest they should come to that place of torment. It is like he knew their minds and lives, and knew that they were hasting thither, and little dreamed that he was there ; yea, and little would have believed one that should have told them so. I remember a passage a gentleman told me he saw upon a bridge over the Severn<sup>r</sup>. A man was driving a flock of fat lambs, and something meeting them and hindering their passage, one of the lambs leaped upon the wall of the bridge, and his legs slipping from under him, he fell into the stream, and the rest seeing him, did one after another leap over the bridge into the stream, and were all, or almost all, drowned. Those that were behind, did little know what was become of them that were gone before, but thought that they might venture to follow their companions. But as soon as ever they were over the wall and falling headlong, the case was altered. Even so it is with unconverted, carnal men. One dieth by them, and drops into hell, and another follows the same way ; and yet they will go after them, because they think not whither they are going. Oh ! but when death has once opened their eyes, and they see what is on the other side of the wall, even in another world, then what would they give to be where they were ?

6. Moreover, they have a subtle, malicious enemy, that is unseen of them, and plays his game in the dark ; and it is his principal business to hinder their conversion ; and therefore to keep them where they are, by persuading them not to believe the Scriptures, or not to trouble their minds with these matters ; or by persuading them to think ill of a godly life, or to think that it is more ado than needs, and that they may be saved without conversion, and without all this stir ; and that God is so merciful, that he will not damn any such as they, or, at least, that they may stay a little longer, and take their pleasure, and follow the world a little longer yet, and then let it go, and repent hereafter ; and by such jug-

<sup>r</sup> Mr. R. Rowley, of Shrewsbury, upon Acham bridge.

gling, deluding cheats as these, the devil keeps most in his captivity, and leadeth them to his misery.

These, and such like impediments as these, do keep so many thousands unconverted, when God hath done so much, and Christ hath suffered so much, and ministers have said so much, for their conversion; when their reasons are silenced, and they are not able to answer the Lord that calls after them, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" yet all comes to nothing with the greatest part of them; and they leave us no more to do after all, but to sit down and lament their wilful misery.

I have now shewed you the reasonableness of God's commands, and the unreasonableness of wicked men's disobedience. If nothing will serve turn, but men will yet refuse to Turn, we are next to consider who it is long of if they be damned. And this brings me to the last Doctrine; which is,

*Doct. VII.* That if, after all this, men will not turn, it is not long of God that they are condemned but of themselves, even their own wilfulness. They die because they will die, that is, because they will not Turn.

If you will go to hell, what remedy? God here acquits himself of your blood; it shall not lie on him if you be lost. A negligent minister may draw it upon him; and those that encourage you, or hinder you not, in sin, may draw it upon them; but be sure of it, it shall not lie upon God. Saith the Lord concerning his unprofitable vineyard, "Judge I pray you, between me and my vineyard, what could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it?" When he had "planted it in a fruitful soil, and fenced it, and gathered out the stones, and planted it with the choicest vines<sup>s</sup>." What should he have done more to it? He hath made you men, and endued you with reason; he hath furnished you with external necessities, all creatures are at your service; he hath given you a righteous, perfect law; when you had broke it, and undone yourselves, he had pity on you, and sent his Son by a miracle of condescending mercy to die for you, and be a sacrifice for your sins, and he "was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." The Lord Jesus hath made you a deed of gift of himself, and eternal life with him, on the condition you will but accept it,

<sup>s</sup> Isa. v. 1—4.



and return. He hath on this reasonable condition, offered you the free pardon of all your sins : he hath written this in his word, and sealed it by his Spirit, and sent it you by his ministers ; they have made the offer to you a hundred and a hundred times, and called you to accept it, and turn to God. They have in his name entreated you, and reasoned the case with you, and answered all your frivolous objections. He hath long waited on you, and staid your leisure ; and suffered you to abuse him to his face. He hath mercifully sustained you in the midst of your sins : he hath compassed you about with all sorts of mercies : he hath also intermixed afflictions, to mind you of your folly, and call you to your wits : and his Spirit hath been often striving with your hearts, and saying there, ‘ Turn sinner, turn to him that calleth thee : whither art thou going ? What art thou doing ? Dost thou know what will be the end ? How long wilt thou hate thy friends, and love thine enemies ? When wilt thou let go all, and Turn, and deliver up thyself to God, and give thy Redeemer the possession of thy soul ? When shall it once be ? ’ These pleadings have been used with thee ; and when thou hast delayed, thou hast been urged to make haste, and God hath called to thee. “ To-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your heart ? Why not now without any more delay ? ” Life hath been set before you ; the joys of heaven have been opened to you in the Gospel : the certainty of them hath been manifested ; the certainty of the everlasting torments of the damned hath been declared to you, unless you would have had a sight of heaven and hell, what could you desire more ? Christ hath been, as it were, set forth crucified before your eyes, Gal. iii. 1. You have been a hundred times told, that you are but lost men, till you come unto him ; as oft as you have been told of the evil of sin, and of the vanity of sin, the world, and all the pleasures and wealth it can afford ; of the shortness and uncertainty of your lives, and the endless duration of the joy or torment of the life to come. All this and more than this, have you been told, and told again, even till you were weary of hearing it, and till you could make the lighter of it, because you had so often heard it ; like the smith’s dog, that is brought, by custom, to sleep under the noise of the hammers, when the sparks do fly about

his ears ; and though all this have not converted you, yet you are alive, and might have mercy, to this day, if you had but hearts to entertain it. And now let reason itself be judge, whether it be long of God or you, if after all this you will be unconverted, and be damned ? If you die now it is because you will die. What should be said more to you ? Or what course should be taken, that is more like to prevail ? Are you able to say and make it good, ‘ We would fain have been converted and become new creatures, but we could not ; we would have changed our company, and our thoughts, and our discourse, but we could not.’ Why could you not if you would ? What hindered you, but the wickedness of your hearts ? Who forced you to sin ? Or who did hold you back from duty ? Had you not the same teaching, and time, and liberty to be godly as your godly neighbours had ? Why then could you not have been godly as well as they ? Were the church doors shut against you, or did you not keep away yourselves ? Or sit and sleep, or hear as if you did not hear ? Did God put in any exceptions against you in his word, when he invited sinners to return, and when he promised mercy to those that do return ? Did he say, ‘ I will pardon all that repent, except thee ?’ Did he shut you out from the liberty of his holy worship ? Did he forbid you to pray to him any more than others ? You know he did not. God did not drive you away from him, but you forsook him, and run away yourselves. And when he called you to him, you would not come. If God had excepted you out of the general promise and offer of mercy, or had said to you, ‘ Stand off, I will have nothing to do with such as you ; pray not to me, for I will not hear you. If you repent never so much, and cry for mercy never so much, I will not regard you.’ If God had left you nothing to trust to but desperation, then you had had a fair excuse. You might have said, ‘ To what end should I repent and turn, when it will do no good ?’ But this was not your case. You might have had Christ to be your Lord and Saviour, your Head and Husband, as well as others, and you would not ; because that ye felt not yourselves sick enough for the physician ; and because you could not spare your disease ; in your hearts ye said as those rebels, Luke xix. 14. “ We will not have this man to reign over us.” Christ would have gathered you under the wings

of his salvation, and you would not<sup>t</sup>. What desires of your welfare did the Lord express in his holy word? With what compassion did he stand over you and say, “O that my people had hearkened unto me, and that they had walked in my way<sup>u</sup>.” “O that there were such a heart in this people, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever<sup>x</sup>.” “O that they were wise, that they understood this; and that they would consider their latter end<sup>y</sup>.” He would have been your God, and done all for you that your souls could well desire: but you loved the world and your flesh above him; and, therefore, you would not hearken to him; though you complimented with him, and gave him high titles, yet when he came to the closing, you would have none of him. No marvel then, if “he gave you up to your own heart’s lusts, and you walked in your own counsels<sup>z</sup>.” He condescends to reason, and pleads the case with you, and asks you, “What is there in me, or my service, that you should be so much against me? What harm have I done thee, sinner? Have I deserved this unkind dealing at thy hands? Many mercies have I shewed thee; for which of them dost thou despise me? Is it I, or is it satan, that is thy enemy? Is it I, or is it thy carnal self that would undo thee? Is it a holy life, or a life of sin, that thou hast cause to fly from? If thou be undone, thou procurest this to thyself, by forsaking me the Lord, that would have saved thee<sup>a</sup>.” “Doth not thine own wickedness correct thee, and thy sin reprove thee. Thou mayst see that it is an evil and bitter thing, that thou hast forsaken me<sup>b</sup>.” “What iniquity have ye found in me, that you have followed after vanity, and forsaken me<sup>c</sup>.” He calleth out, as it were, to the brutes to hear the controversy that he hath against you. “Hear O mountains, the Lord’s controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done to thee, and wherein have I wearied thee, testify against me; for I brought thee out of Egypt, and redeemed thee<sup>d</sup>.” “Hear, O heavens, and give ear O earth,

<sup>t</sup> Matt. xxiii. 27.<sup>y</sup> Deut. xxxii. 29.<sup>b</sup> Jer. ii. 19.<sup>u</sup> Psal. lxxxi. 13.<sup>z</sup> Psal. lxxxi. 11, 12.<sup>c</sup> Jer. ii. 5, 6.<sup>x</sup> Deut. v. 29.<sup>a</sup> Jer. ii. 17.<sup>d</sup> Mic. vi. 2—5.



for the Lord hath spoken. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers<sup>e</sup>!" &c. "Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy father that bought thee, and established thee<sup>f</sup>?" When he saw that you forsook him even for nothing, and turned away from your Lord and life, to hunt after the chaff and feathers of the world, he told you of your folly, and called you to a more profitable employment. "Wherefore do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him, while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon<sup>g</sup>." And so Isa. i. 16—18. And when you would not hear, what complaints have you put him to, charging it on you as your wilfulness, and stubbornness? "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; for my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters; and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water<sup>h</sup>." Many a time hath Christ proclaimed that free invitation to you, "Let him that is athirst come: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely<sup>i</sup>." But you put him to complain after all his offers; "They will not come to me that they may have life<sup>k</sup>." He hath invited you to feast with him in the kingdom of his grace; and you have had excuses from your grounds, and your cattle, and your worldly business, and when you would not come, you have said you could not, and provoked him to resolve that you should never taste of his supper<sup>l</sup>. And who is it long of

<sup>e</sup> Isa. i. 2—4.<sup>f</sup> Deut. xxxii. 6.<sup>g</sup> Isa. lv. 1—3. 6, 7.<sup>h</sup> Jer. ii. 12, 13.<sup>i</sup> Rev. xxii. 17.<sup>k</sup> John v. 40.<sup>l</sup> Luke xiv. 15—23.

now but yourselves? And what can you say is the chief cause of your damnation, but your own wills? You would be damned. The whole case is laid open by Christ himself, Prov. i. 20. to the end: "Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets: she crieth in the chief place of concourse. How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would have none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me; for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof: therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from the fear of evil." I thought best to recite the whole text at large to you, because it doth so fully shew the cause of the destruction of the wicked. It is not because God would not teach them but because they would not learn. It is not because God would not call them, but because they would not turn at his reproof. Their wilfulness is their undoing.

USE. From what hath been said, you may further learn these following things:

1. From hence you may see, not only what blasphemy and impiety it is, to lay the blame of men's destruction upon God: but also how unfit these wicked wretches are, to bring in such a charge against their Maker. They cry out upon God, and say, he gives them no grace, and his threatenings are severe, and God forbid that all should be damned that be not converted and sanctified, and they think it hard measure, that a short sin should have an endless suffering; and if they be damned, they say, they cannot help it. When in

the meantime they are busy about their own destruction, even cutting the throat of their own souls, and will not be persuaded to hold their hand. They think God were cruel if he should damn them, and yet they are cruel to themselves, and they will run into the fire of hell, when God hath told them it is a little before them; and neither entreaties nor threatenings, nor any thing that can be said, will stop them. We see them almost undone; their careless, worldly, fleshly, lives do tell us, that they are in the power of the devil; we know, if they die before they are converted, all the world cannot save them; and knowing the uncertainty of their lives, we are afraid every day lest they drop into the fire. And, therefore, we entreat them to pity their own souls, and not to undo themselves when mercy is at hand, and they will not hear us. We entreat them to cast away their sin, and come to Christ without delay, and to have some mercy on themselves; but they will have none. And yet they think that God must be cruel if he condemn them. O wretched, wretched sinners! It is not God that is so cruel to you; it is you that are cruel to yourselves. You are told, you must Turn or Burn, and yet you turn not. You are told, that if you will needs keep your sins, you shall keep the curse of God with them, and yet you will keep them. You are told, that there is no way to happiness but by holiness, and yet you will not be holy. What would you have God say more to you? What would you have him do with his mercy? He offered it to you, and you will not have it. You are in the ditch of sin and misery, and he would give you his hand to help you out, and you refuse his help; he would cleanse you of your sins, and you had rather keep them. You love your lusts, and love your gluttony, and sports, and drunkenness, and will not let them go; and would you have him bring you to heaven whether you will or no? Or would you have him to bring you and your sins to heaven together? Why, that is an impossibility; you may as well expect he should turn the sun into darkness. What, an unsanctified, fleshly heart be in heaven! it cannot be! "There entereth nothing that is unclean," Rev. xxi. 17. "For what communication hath light with darkness, or Christ with Belial?" 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. "All the day long hath he stretched out his hands to a disobedient and



gainsaying people," Rom. x. 25. What will ye do now? Will you cry to God for mercy? Why, God calleth upon you to have mercy upon yourselves, and you will not; ministers see the poisoned cup in the drunkard's hand, and tell him, 'There is poison in it,' and desire him to have mercy on his soul, and forbear, and he will not hear us; drink it he must, and will; he loves it, and, therefore, though hell comes next, he saith, he cannot help it. What should one say to such men as these? We tell the ungodly, careless worldlings, 'It is not such a life that will serve the turn, or ever bring you to heaven. If a bear were at your back, you would mend your pace; and when the curse of God is at your back, and satan and hell are at your back, you will not stir, but ask, 'What needs all this ado?' Is an immortal soul of no more worth? O have mercy upon yourselves! But they will have no mercy on themselves, nor once regard us. We tell them the end will be bitter. Who can dwell with the everlasting fire? And yet they will have no mercy upon themselves. And yet will these shameful wretches say, that God is more merciful than to condemn them? when it is themselves that cruelly and unmercifully run upon condemnation? And if we should go to them with our hats in our hands, and entreat them, we cannot stop them; if we should fall down on our knees to them, we cannot stop them; but to hell they will, and yet will not believe that they are going thither. If we beg of them, for the sake of God that made them, and preserveth them; for the sake of Christ that died for them; for the sake of their own poor souls, to pity themselves, and go no farther in the way to hell, but come to Christ while his arms are open, and enter into the state of life, while the door stands open, and now take mercy while mercy may be had, they will not be persuaded. If we should die for it, we cannot get them so much as now and then to consider with themselves of the matter, and to Turn. And yet they can say, 'I hope God will be merciful.' Did you never consider what he saith, Isa. xxvii. 11. "It is a people of no understanding, therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them; and he that formed them will shew them no favour." If another man will not clothe you when you are naked, and feed you when you are hungry, you will say he is unmerciful. If he should cast

you into prison, or beat or torment you, you would say he is unmerciful. And yet you would do a thousand times more against yourselves, even cast away both soul and body for ever, and never complain of your own unmercifulness. Yea, and God that waited upon you all the while with his mercy, must be taken to be unmerciful, if he punish you after all this. Unless the holy God of heaven will give these wretches leave to trample upon his Son's blood, and with the Jews, as it were, again to spit in his face, and do despite to the Spirit of Grace, and make a jest of sin, and a mock at holiness, and set more light by saving mercy, than by the filth of their fleshly pleasure; and unless, after all this, he will save them by the mercy which they cast away, and would none of, God himself must be called unmerciful by them; but he will be justified when he judgeth; and he will not stand or fall at the bar of a sinful worm.

I know there are many particular cavils, that are brought by them against the Lord, but I shall not here stay to answer them particularly, having done it already in my "Treatise on Judgment," to which I shall refer them. Had the disputing part of the world been as careful to avoid sin and destruction, as they have been busy in searching after the cause of them, and forward indirectly to impute it to God, they might have exercised their wits more profitably, and have less wronged God, and sped better themselves. When so ugly a monster as sin is within us, and so heavy a thing as punishment is on us, and so dreadful a thing as hell is before us, one would think it should be an easy question who is in the fault, and whether God or man be the principal or culpable cause? Some men are such favourable judges of themselves, that they are proner to accuse the Infinite Perfection and Goodness itself, than their own hearts, and imitate their first parents, that said, "The serpent tempted me, and the woman that thou gavest me, gave unto me, and I did eat," secretly implying that God was the cause. So say they, 'The understanding that thou gavest me was unable to discern; the will that thou gavest me, was unable to make a better choice; the objects which thou didst set before me, did entice me; the temptation which thou didst permit to assault me, prevailed against me.' And some are so loath to think, that God can make a self-determining

creature, that they dare not deny him that which they take to be his prerogative, to be the determiner of the will in every sin, as the first efficient, immediate, physical cause. And many could be content to acquit God from so much causing of evil, if they could but reconcile it with his being the chief cause of good. As if truths would be no longer truths, than we are able to see them in their perfect order and coherence, because our ravelled wits cannot set them right together, nor assign each truth its proper place, we presume to conclude, that some must be cast away. This is the fruit of proud self-conceitedness, when men receive not God's truth as a child his lesson, in a holy submission to the holy omniscience of our teacher, but as censurers that are too wise to learn.

*Object.* 'But we cannot convert ourselves till God convert us; we can do nothing without his grace. It is not in him that willeth, nor in him that runneth, but in God that sheweth mercy.'

*Ans.* 1. God hath two degrees of mercy to shew: the mercy of conversion first, and the mercy of salvation last. The latter he will give to none but those that will and run, and hath promised it to them only. The former is to make them willing that were unwilling; and though your own willingness and endeavours deserve not his grace, yet your wilful refusal deserveth that it should be denied unto you. Your disability is your very unwillingness itself, which excuseth not your sin, but maketh it the greater. You could turn, if you were but truly willing, and if your wills themselves are so corrupted, that nothing but effectual grace will move them, you have the more cause to seek for that grace, and yield to it, and do what you can in the use of the means, and not neglect it, nor set against it. Do what you are able first, and then complain of God for denying you grace, if you have cause.

*Object.* 'But you seem to intimate, all this while, that man hath freewill.'

*Ans.* The dispute about freewill is beyond your capacity, I shall, therefore, now trouble you with no more but this about it. Your will is naturally a free, that is, a self-determining faculty, but it is viciously inclined, and backward to do good; and, therefore, we see by sad experience that it



hath not a virtuous, moral freedom. But that is the wickedness of it which deserveth the punishment. And I pray you let us not befool ourselves with opinions. Let the case be your own. If you had an enemy so malicious, that he falls upon you and beats you every time he meets you, and takes away the lives of your children, will you excuse him, because he saith, 'I have not freewill, it is my nature, I cannot choose, unless God give me grace?' If you have a servant that robbeth you, will you take such an answer from him? Might not every thief and murderer that is hanged at the assize, give such an answer, 'I have not free will, I cannot change my own heart. What can I do without God's grace?' And shall they, therefore, be acquitted? If not, why then should you think to be acquitted for a course of sin against the Lord?

2. From hence also you may observe these three things together. (1.) What a subtle tempter satan is. (2.) What a deceitful thing sin is. (3.) What a foolish corrupted creature man is. A subtle tempter, indeed, that can persuade the greatest part of the world to go wilfully into everlasting fire, when they have so many warnings and dissuasives as they have? A deceitful thing is sin, indeed, that can bewitch so many thousands to part with everlasting life, for a thing so base and utterly unworthy! A foolish creature is man, indeed, that will be so cheated of his salvation for nothing; yea, for a known nothing! and that by an enemy, and a known enemy! You would think it impossible that any man in his wits should be persuaded for a trifle, to cast himself into the fire or water, into a coal-pit, to the destruction of his life; and yet men will be enticed to cast themselves into hell. If your natural lives were in your own hands, that you should not die till you would kill yourselves, how long would most of you live? And yet, when your everlasting life is so far in your own hands, under God, that you cannot be undone till you undo yourselves, how few of you will forbear your own undoing? Ah, what a silly thing is man! and what a bewitching and befooling thing is sin!

3. From hence also you may learn, that it is no great wonder, if wicked men be hinderers of others in the way to heaven, and would have as many unconverted as they can, and would draw them into sin, and keep them in it. Can

you expect that they should have mercy on others, that have none upon themselves? and that they should much stick at the destruction of others, that stick not to destroy themselves? They do no worse by others, than they do by themselves.

4. Lastly, You may hence learn that the greatest enemy to man is himself, and the greatest judgment in this life, that can befall him, is to be left to himself; and that the great work that grace hath to do, is to save us from ourselves, and the greatest accusations and complaints of men should be against themselves, and that the greatest work we have to do ourselves, is to resist ourselves; and the greatest enemy we should daily pray, and watch, and strive against, is our carnal hearts and wills; and the greatest part of your work, if you would do good to others, and help them to heaven, is to save them from themselves, even from their own blind understandings, and corrupted wills, and perverse affections, and violent passions, and unruly senses. I only name all these for brevity sake, and leave them to your farther consideration,

Well, sirs, now we have found out the great delinquent and murderer of souls (even men's selves, their own wills); what remains, but that you judge according to the evidence, and confess this great iniquity before the Lord, and be humbled for it, and do so no more? To these three ends distinctly, I shall add a few words more. 1. Farther to convince you. 2. To humble you. And 3. To reform you, if there be yet any hopes.

1. We know so much of the exceeding gracious nature of God, who is willing to do good, and delighteth to shew mercy, that we have no reason to suspect him of being the culpable cause of our death, or call him cruel. He made all good, and he preserveth and maintaineth all. "The eyes of all things do wait upon him, and he giveth them their meat in due season; he openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desires of all the living <sup>m</sup>." He is not only "righteous in all his ways," (and, therefore, will deal justly) "and holy in all his works, (and, therefore, not the author of sin) but "he is also good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works <sup>n</sup>."

But as for man, we know his mind is dark, his will per-

<sup>m</sup> Psal. cxlv. 15, 16.

<sup>n</sup> Psal. cxlv. 17. 9.

verse, his affections carry him so headlong, that he is fitted by folly and corruption, to such a work as the destroying of himself. If you saw a lamb lie killed in the way, would you sooner suspect the sheep, or the dog, or wolf to be the author of it, if they both stand by ; or if you see a house broken, and the people murdered, would you sooner suspect the prince, or judge, that is wise and just, and had no need ; or a known thief, or murderer ? I say, therefore, as James, i. 13—15. " Let no man say when he is tempted, that he is tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man," (to draw him to sin) " but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin : and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." You see here, that sin is the brat of your own concupiscence, and not to be fathered on God ; and that death is the offspring of your own sin, and the fruit which it will yield you as soon as it is ripe. You have a treasure of evil in yourselves, as a spider hath of poison, from whence you are bringing forth hurt to yourselves ; and spinning such webs as entangle your own souls. Your nature shews it is you that are the cause.

2. It is evident, you are your own destroyers, in that you are so ready to entertain any temptation almost that is offered you. Satan is scarce readier to move you to any evil, than you are ready to hear, and to do as he would have you. If he would tempt your understanding to error, and prejudice, you yield. If he would hinder you from good resolutions, it is soon done. If he would cool any good desires or affections, it is soon done. If he would kindle any lust, or vile affections and desires in you, it is soon done. If he would put you on to evil thoughts, words, or deeds, you are so free, that he needs no rod or spur. If he would keep you from holy thoughts, and words, and ways, a little doth it ; you need no curb. You examine not his suggestions, nor resist them with any resolution, nor cast them out as he casts them in, nor quench the sparks which he endeavoureth to kindle. But you set in with him and meet him half-way, and embrace his motions, and tempt him to tempt you. And it is easy to catch such greedy fish that are ranging for a bait, and will take the bare hook.



3. Your destruction is evidently long of yourselves, in that you resist all that would help to save you, and would do you good, or hinder you from undoing yourselves. God would help and save you by his word, and you resist it, it is too strict for you. He would sanctify you by his Spirit, and you resist and quench it. If any man reprove you for your sin, you fly in his face with evil words; and if he would draw you to a holy life, and tell you of your present danger, you give him little thanks, but either bid him look to himself, he shall not answer for you; or else at best, you put him off with a heartless thanks, and will not turn when you are persuaded. If ministers would privately instruct and help you, you will not come at them, your unhumbled souls do feel but little need of their help. If they would catechise you, you are too old to be catechised, though you are not too old to be ignorant and unholy. Whatever they can say to you for your good, you are self-conceited and wise in your own eyes, (even in the depth of ignorance) that you will regard nothing that agreeth not with your present conceits, but contradict your teachers, as if you were wiser than they; you resist all that they can say to you, by your ignorance and wilfulness, and foolish cavils, and shifting evasions, and unthankful rejections; so that no good that is offered, can find any welcome acceptance or entertainment with you.

4. Moreover, it is apparent that you are self-destroyers, in that you draw the matter of your sin and destruction, even from the blessed God himself. You like not the contrivance of his wisdom. You like not his justice, but take it for cruelty. You like not his holiness, but are ready to think he is such an one as yourselves. Psal. l. 21. and makes as light of sin as you. You like not his truth, but would have his threatenings, even his peremptory threatenings, prove false. And his goodness, which you seem most highly to approve, you partly abuse to the strengthening of your sin, as if you might the freelier sin, because God is merciful, and because his grace doth so much abound.

5. Yea, you fetch destruction from your blessed Redeemer, and death from the Lord of life himself. And nothing more emboldeneth you in sin, than that Christ hath died for you; as if now the danger of death were over, and

you might boldly venture. As if Christ were become a servant to satan, and your sins, and must wait upon you while you are abusing him ; and because he is become the physician of souls, and is able to save to the utmost, all that come to God by him, you think he must suffer you to refuse his help, and throw away his medicines, and must save you, whether you will come to God by him or no ; so that a great part of your sins are occasioned by your bold presumption by the death of Christ.

Not considering that he came to redeem his people from their sin, and to sanctify them a peculiar people to himself, and to conform them in holiness to the image of their heavenly Father, and to their head.<sup>p</sup>

6. You also fetch your own destruction from all the providences, and works of God. When you think of his eternal foreknowledge and decrees, it is to harden you in your sin, or possess your minds with quarrelling thoughts, as if his decrees might spare you the labour of repentance, and a holy life, or else were the cause of your sin and death. If he afflict you, you repine ; if he prosper you, you the more forget him, and are the more backward to the thoughts of the life to come. If the wicked prosper, you forget the end that will set all reckonings straight ; and are ready to think, it is as good to be wicked as godly. And thus you draw your death from all.

7. And the like you do from all the creatures, and mercies of God to you, he giveth them to you as the tokens of his love, and furniture for his service, and you turn them against him to the pleasing of your flesh. You eat and drink to please your appetite, and not for the glory of God, and to enable you for his work. Your clothes you abuse to pride. Your riches draw your hearts from heaven<sup>q</sup>. Your honours and applause do puff you up ; if you have health and strength, it makes you more secure, and forget your end. Yea, other men's mercies are abused by you to your hurt. If you see their honours and dignity, you are provoked to envy them. If you see their riches, you are ready to covet them. If you look upon beauty, you are stirred up to lust. And it is well if godliness be not an eye-sore to you.

<sup>p</sup> Matt. i. 21. Tit. ii. 14. 1 Pet. i. 15, 16. Col. iii. 10, 11. Phil. iii. 9, 10.

<sup>q</sup> Phil. iii. 18.

8. The very gifts that God bestoweth on you, and the ordinances of grace which he hath instituted for his church you turn unto your sin. If you have better parts than others, you grow proud and self-conceited. If you have but common gifts you take them for special grace. You take the bare hearing of your duty for so good a work, as if it would excuse you for not obeying it. Your prayers are turned into sin, because you “regard iniquity in your hearts<sup>r</sup>.” “And depart not from iniquity when you call on the name of the Lord<sup>s</sup>.” “Your prayers are abominable, because you turn away your ear from hearing the law<sup>t</sup>.” And are more ready to “offer the sacrifice of fools,” (thinking you do God some special service) “than to hear his word, and obey it<sup>u</sup>” You examine not yourselves before you receive the supper of the Lord, but not discerning the Lord’s body, do eat and drink judgment to yourselves<sup>x</sup>.

9. Yea, the persons you converse with, and all their actions, you make the occasions of your sin and destruction. If they live in the fear of God, you hate them. If they live ungodly you imitate them. If the wicked are many, you think you may the more boldly follow them. If the godly be few, you are the more emboldened to despise them: if they walk exactly, you think they are too precise: if one of them fall into a particular temptation, you stumble upon them, and turn away from holiness, because others are imperfectly holy: as if you were warranted to break your necks because some others have, by their heedlessness, sprained a sinew or put out a bone. If a hypocrite discover himself, you say, ‘They are all alike,’ and think yourselves as honest as the best. A professor can scarce slip into any miscarriage, but because he cuts his finger, you think you may boldly cut your throats. If ministers deal plainly with you, you say they rail: if they speak gently or coldly, you either sleep under them, or are little more affected than the seats you sit upon. If any errors creep into the church, some greedily entertain them, and others reproach the Christian doctrine for them, which is most against them. And if we would draw you from any ancient, rooted

<sup>r</sup> Psal. lxi. 18.<sup>s</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 19.<sup>t</sup> Prov. xxviii. 9.<sup>u</sup> Eccl. v. 1.<sup>x</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 28, 29.



error, which can but plead two, or three, or six, or seven hundred years custom, you are as much offended with a motion for reformation, as if you were to lose your life by it, and hold fast old errors while you cry out against new ones. Scarce a difference can arise among the ministers of the Gospel, but you will fetch your own death from it. And you will not hear, or at least, not obey the unquestionable doctrine of any of those that jump not with your conceits: one will not hear a minister, because he readeth his sermons, and another will not hear him, because he doth not read them. One will not hear him because he saith the Lord's prayer; and another will not hear him, because he doth not use it. One will not hear them that are for episcopacy, and another will not hear them that are against it. And thus I might shew you in many other cases, how you turn all that comes near you to your own destruction; so clear is it, that the ungodly are self-destroyers, and that their perdition is of themselves.

Methinks, now, upon the consideration of what is said, and the review of your own ways, you should bethink you what you have done, and be ashamed, and deeply humbled to remember it. If you be not, I pray you consider these following truths.

1. To be your own destroyers, is to sin against the deepest principle in your natures, even the principle of self-preservation. Every thing naturally desireth or inclineth to its own felicity, welfare, or perfection. And will you set yourselves to your own destruction? When you are commanded to love your neighbours as yourselves, it is supposed that you naturally love yourselves: but if you love your neighbours no better than yourselves, it seems you would have all the world be damned.

2. How extremely do you cross your own intentions! I know you intend not your own damnation, even when you are procuring it; you think you are but doing good to yourselves, by gratifying the desires of your flesh. But alas! it is but as a draught of cold water in a burning fever, or as the scratching of an itching wildfire, which increaseth the disease and pain. If indeed you would have pleasure, profit, or honour, seek them where they are to be found, and do not hunt after them in the way to hell.

3. What pity is it, that you should do that against yourselves which none else in earth or hell can do! If all the world were combined against you, or all the devils in hell were combined against you, they could not destroy you without yourselves, nor make you sin, but by your own consent. And will you do that against yourselves which none else can do. You have hateful thoughts of the devil, because he is your enemy, and endeavoureth your destruction. And will you be worse than devils to yourselves? Why thus it is with you, if you had hearts to understand it; when you run into sin, and run from godliness, and refuse to turn at the call of God, you do more against your own souls than men or devils could do besides. And if you should set yourselves, and bend your wits to do yourselves the greatest mischief, you could not devise to do a greater.

4. You are false to the trust that God hath reposed in you. He hath much intrusted you with your own salvation; and will you betray your trust? He hath set you with all diligence to keep your hearts; and is this the keeping of them<sup>x</sup>.

5. You do even forbid all others to pity you, when you will have no pity on yourselves. If you cry to God in the day of your calamity, for mercy, mercy; what can you expect, but that he should thrust you away, and say, 'Nay, thou wouldst not have mercy on thyself; who brought this upon thee but thine own wilfulness?' And if your brethren see you everlastingly in misery, how should they pity you, that were your own destroyers, and would not be dissuaded.

6. It will everlastingly make you your own tormentors in hell, to think on it, that you brought yourselves wilfully to that misery. O, what a griping thought it will be for ever, to think with yourselves, that this was your own doing. That you were warned of this day, and warned again, but it would not do; that you wilfully sinned, and turned away from God; that you had time as well as others, but you abused it; you had teachers as well as others, but you refused their instructions: you had holy examples, but you did not imitate them: you were offered Christ, grace, and glory as well as others, but you had more mind to fleshly pleasures: you had a prize in your hands, but had not a heart to lay it out<sup>y</sup>.

<sup>x</sup> Prov. iv. 23.

<sup>y</sup> Prov. xvii. 16.

Can it choose but torment you, to think of this your present folly? O that your eyes were opened to see what you have done in the wilful wronging of your own souls! And that you better understood those words of God, Prov. viii. 33—35. “Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord: but he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me, love death.”

And now I am come to the conclusion of this work, my heart is troubled to think how I shall leave you, lest after this the flesh should deceive you, and the world and the devil should keep you asleep, and I should leave you as I found you, till you awake in hell. Though, in care of your poor souls, I am afraid of this, as knowing the obstinacy of a carnal heart, yet I can say with the prophet Jeremiah, “I have not desired the woeful day, the Lord knoweth<sup>y</sup>.” I have not with James and John, desired that fire might come down from heaven, to consume them that refused Jesus Christ. But it is the preventing of the eternal fire that I have been all this while endeavouring: and O that it had been a needless work! That God and conscience might have been as willing to spare me this labour, as some of you could have been. But dear friends, I am so loath you should lie in everlasting fire, and be shut out of heaven, if it be possible to prevent it, that I shall once more ask you, What do you now resolve? Will you Turn or Die? I look upon you as a physician on his patient, in a dangerous disease, that saith unto him, ‘Though you are so far gone, take but this medicine, and forbear but these few things that are so hurtful to you, and I dare warrant your life; but if you will not do this, you are a dead man.’ What would you think of such a man, if the physician and all the friends he hath, cannot persuade him to take one medicine to save his life, or to forbear one or two poisonous things that would kill him? This is your case. As far as you are gone in sin, do but now Turn and come to Christ, and take his remedies, and your souls shall live. Cast up your deadly sins by repentance, and return not to your poisonous vomit any more, and you



shall do well. But yet if it were your bodies, that we had to deal with, we might partly know what to do with you. Though you would not consent, you might be held or bound, while the medicine was poured down your throats, and hurtful things might be kept from you. But about your souls it cannot be so ; we cannot convert you against your wills. There is no carrying madmen to heaven in fetters. You may be condemned against your wills, because you sinned with your wills ; but you cannot be saved against your wills. The wisdom of God hath thought meet to lay men's salvation or destruction exceeding much upon the choice of their own wills : that no man shall come to heaven that choose not the way to heaven ; and no man shall come to hell, but shall be forced to say, ' I have the thing I chose, my own will did bring me hither.' Now if I could but get you to be willing, to be thoroughly, and resolvedly, and habitually willing, the work were more than half done. And alas ! must we lose our friends, and must they lose their God, their happiness, their souls, for want of this ? O God forbid ! It is a strange thing to me, that men are so inhuman and stupid in the greatest matters, that in lesser things are very civil and courteous, and good neighbours. For aught I know, I have the love of all, or almost all my neighbours, so far, that if I should send to every man in the town, or parish, or country, and request a reasonable courtesy of them, they will grant it me ; and yet when I come to request of them the greatest matter in the world, for themselves, and not for me, I can have nothing of many of them, but a patient hearing. I know not whether people think a man in the pulpit is in good sadness or not, and means as he speaks : for I think I have few neighbours, but if I were sitting familiarly with them, and telling them of what I have seen or done, or known in the world, they would believe me, and regard what I say ; but when I tell them from the infallible word of God, what they themselves shall see and know in the world to come, they shew by their lives that they do either not believe it, or not much regard it. If I met ever an one of them on the way, and told them, yonder is a coal-pit, or there is a quicksand, or there are thieves lay in wait for you, I could persuade them to turn by. But when I tell them that satan lieth in wait for them, and that sin is

poison to them, and that hell is not a matter to be jested with, they go on as if they did not hear me. Truly, neighbours, I am in as good earnest with you in the pulpit, as I am in any familiar discourse, and if ever you will regard me, I beseech you let it be here. I think there is never a man of you all, but if my own soul lay at your wills, you would be willing to save it (though I cannot promise that you would leave your sins for it). Tell me thou drunkard, art thou so cruel to me that speaks to thee, that thou wouldst not forbear a few cups of drink, if thou knewest it would save my soul from hell? Hadst thou rather I did burn there for ever, than thou shouldst live soberly as other men do? If so, may I not say, thou art an unmerciful monster, and not a man? If I came hungry or naked to one of your doors, would you not part with more than a cup of drink to relieve me? I am confident you would; if it were to save my life, I know you would (some of you) hazard your own. And yet will not be entreated to part with your sensual pleasures for your own salvation? Wouldst thou forbear a hundred cups of drink, man, to save my life, if it were in thy power, and wilt thou not do it to save thy own soul? I profess to you, sirs, I am as hearty a beggar with you this day, for the saving of your souls, as I would be for my own supply, if I were forced to come a begging to your doors. And, therefore, if you would hear me then, hear me now. If you would pity me then, be entreated now to pity yourselves. I do again beseech you, as if it were on my bended knees, that you would hearken to your Redeemer, and Turn, that you may Live. All you that have lived in ignorance, and carelessness, and presumption, to this day; and all you that have been drowned in the cares of the world, and have no mind of God and eternal glory; all you that are enslaved to your fleshly desires of meats and drinks, sports and lusts; and all you that know not the necessity of holiness, and never were acquainted with the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost upon your souls; that never embraced your blessed Redeemer by a lively faith, and with admiring and thankful apprehensions of his love, and that never felt a higher estimation of God and heaven, and a heartier love to them, than to your fleshly prosperity, and the things below: I earnestly beseech you, not only for my sake, but for the Lord's sake,

and for your soul's sake, that you go not on one day longer in your former condition, but look about you and cry to God for converting grace, that you may be made new creatures, and may escape the plagues that are a little before you. And if ever you will do any thing for me, grant me this request to Turn from your evil ways and live: deny me any thing that ever I shall ask you for myself, if you will but grant me this. And if you deny me this, I care not for any thing else that you would grant me. Nay, as ever you will do any thing at the request of the Lord that made you, and redeemed you, deny him not this; for if you deny him this, he cares for nothing that you shall grant him. As ever you would have him hear your prayers, and grant your requests, and do for you at the hour of death and day of judgment, or in any of your extremities, deny not his request now in the day of your prosperity. O sirs, believe it, death and judgment, and heaven and hell, are other matters when you come near them, than they seem to carnal eyes afar off. Then you will hear such a message as I bring you, with more awakened, regardful hearts.

Well, though I cannot hope so well of all, I will hope that some of you are by this time purposing to Turn and Live; and that you are ready to ask me, as the Jews did Peter, when they were pricked to their hearts, and said, “Men and brethren, what shall we do<sup>z</sup>?” How might we come to be truly converted? We are willing, if we did but know our duty. God forbid that we should choose destruction, by refusing conversion, as hitherto we have done.’

If these be the thoughts and purposes of your hearts, I say of you, as God did of a promising people, “They have well said, all that they have spoken: O that there was such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always<sup>a</sup>.” Your purposes are good: O that there were but a heart in you to perform these purposes! And in hope thereof, I shall gladly give you direction what to do, and that but briefly, that you may the more easily remember it for your practice.

*Direct.* 1. If you would be converted and saved, labour to understand the necessity and true nature of conversion;

<sup>z</sup> Acts ii. 37.

<sup>a</sup> Deut. v. 28, 29.



for what, and from what, and to what, and by what, it is that you must Turn.

Consider what a lamentable condition you are in till the hour of your conversion, that you may see it is not a state to be rested in. You are under the guilt of all the sins that ever you committed, and under the wrath of God, and the curse of his law; you are bond-slaves to the devil, and daily employed in his work against the Lord, yourselves, and others. You are spiritually dead and deformed, as being void of the holy life, and nature, and image of the Lord. You are unfit for any holy work, and do nothing that is truly pleasing unto God. You are without any promise or assurance of his protection; and live in continual danger of his justice, not knowing what hour you may be snatched away to hell, and most certain to be damned in that condition. And nothing short of conversion can prevent it. Whatever civilities, or amendments, or virtues, are short of true conversion, will never procure the saving of your souls. Keep the true sense of this natural misery, and so of the necessity of conversion, on your hearts.

And then you must understand what it is to be converted; it is to have a new heart or disposition, and a new conversation.

*Quest. 1.* 'For what must we Turn?'

*Answ.* For these ends following, which you may attain.

1. You shall immediately be made living members of Christ, and have interest in him, and be renewed after the image of God, and be adorned with all his graces, and quickened with a new and heavenly life, and saved from the tyranny of satan and the dominion of sin, and be justified from the curse of the law, and have the pardon of all the sins of your whole lives, and be accepted of God, and made his sons, and have liberty with boldness to call him Father, and go to him by prayer in all your needs, with a promise of acceptance; you shall have the Holy Ghost to dwell in you, to sanctify and guide you. You shall have part in the brotherhood, communion, and prayers of the saints. You shall be fitted for God's service, and be freed from the dominion of sin, and be useful and a blessing to the place where you live, and shall have the promise of this life and that which is to come. You shall want nothing that is truly good for you, and your

necessary afflictions you will be enabled to bear. You may have some taste of the communion of God in the Spirit ; especially in all holy ordinances, where God prepareth a feast for your souls. You shall be heirs of heaven while you live on earth, and may foresee, by faith, the everlasting glory, and so may live and die in peace ; and you shall never be so low, but your peace and happiness will be incomparably greater than your misery.

How precious is every one of these blessings, which I do but briefly name, and which in this life you may receive !

And then, 2. At death your souls shall go to Christ, and at the day of judgment both soul and body shall be justified and glorified, and enter into your Master's joy ; where your happiness will consist in these particulars.

(1.) You shall be perfected yourselves : your mortal bodies shall be made immortal, and the corruptible shall put on incorruption ; you shall no more be hungry, thirsty, weary, or sick ; nor shall you need to fear either shame, sorrow, death, or hell. Your souls shall be perfectly freed from sin, and perfectly fitted for the knowledge, love, and praises of the Lord.

(2.) Your employment shall be to behold your glorified Redeemer, with all your holy fellow-citizens of heaven ; and to see the glory of the most blessed God, and to love him perfectly, and be loved by him, and to praise him everlastingly.

(3.) Your glory will contribute to the glory of the New Jerusalem, the city of the living God, which is more than to have a private felicity to yourselves.

(4.) Your glory will contribute to the glorifying of your Redeemer, who will everlastingly be magnified and pleased in you, that are the travail of his soul. And this is more than the glorifying of yourselves.

(5.) And the Eternal Majesty, the living God, will be glorified in your glory, both as he is magnified by your praises, and as he communiceth of his glory and goodness to you, and as he is pleased in you ; and in the accomplishment of his glorious works, in the glory of the New Jerusalem, and of his Son.

All this the poorest beggar of you that is converted, shall certainly and endlessly enjoy.

2. You see for what you must turn; next you must understand from what you must turn. And that is, in a word, from your carnal self, which is the end of all the unconverted. From the flesh, that would be pleased before God, and would still be enticing you thereto. From the world, that is the bait; and from the devil, that is the angler for souls, and the deceiver. And so from all known and wilful sins.

3. Next you must know to what you must turn. And that is, to God, as your end; to Christ, as the way to the Father; to holiness, as the way appointed you by Christ; and so, to the use of all the helps and means of grace offered you by the Lord.

4. Lastly, You must know by what you must turn. And that is, by Christ, as the only Redeemer and Intercessor; and by the Holy Ghost, as the Sanctifier; and by the word, as his instrument or means; and by faith and repentance, as the means and duties on your part to be performed. All this is of necessity.

*Direct. 2.* 'If you would be converted and saved, be much in secret, serious consideration.' Inconsiderateness undoes the world. Withdraw yourselves off into retired seclusion, and there bethink you of the end why you were made, of the life you have lived, the time you have lost, the sins you have committed; of the love, and sufferings, and fullness of Christ; of the danger you are in; of the nearness of death and judgment; and of the certainty and excellency of the joys of heaven; and of the certainty and terror of the torments of hell, and the eternity of both; and of the necessity of conversion and a holy life: steep your hearts in such considerations as these.

*Direct. 3.* 'If you will be converted and saved, attend upon the word of God, which is the ordinary means.' Read the Scripture, or hear it read, and other holy writings that do apply it; constantly attend upon the preaching of the word. As God will lighten the world by the sun, and not by himself alone, without it; so will he convert and save men by his ministers, who are the lights of the world<sup>b</sup>. When he hath miraculously humbled Paul, he sendeth him to Ananias<sup>c</sup>. And when he hath sent an angel to Cornelius, it is

<sup>b</sup> Acts xxvi. 17, 18. Matt. v. 14.

<sup>c</sup> Acts ix. 10.



but to bid him send for Peter, who must tell him what he is to believe and do.

*Direct. 4.* ‘Betake yourselves to God, in a course of earnest, constant prayer.’ Confess and lament your former lives, and beg his grace to illuminate and convert you. Beseech him to pardon what is past, and give you his Spirit, and change your hearts and lives, and lead you in his ways, and save you from temptation. And ply this work daily, and be not weary of it.

*Direct. 5.* ‘Presently give over your known and wilful sins, make a stand, and go that way no further.’ Be drunk no more, but avoid the places and occasion of it. Cast away your lusts and sinful pleasures with detestation. Curse and swear, and rail no more; and if you have wronged any, restore as Zaccheus did. If you will commit again your old sins, what blessing can you expect on the means of conversion?

*Direct. 6.* ‘Presently, if possible, change your company, if it hath hitherto been bad.’ Not by forsaking your necessary relations, but your unnecessary, sinful companions, and join yourselves with those that fear the Lord, and inquire of them the way to heaven<sup>d</sup>.

*Direct. 7.* ‘Deliver up yourselves to the Lord Jesus, as the physician of your souls, that he may pardon you by his blood, and sanctify you by his Spirit, by his word and ministers, the instruments of his Spirit. “He is the way, the truth, and the life: there is no coming to the Father but by him<sup>e</sup>,” “nor is there any other name under heaven by which you can be saved<sup>f</sup>.” Study therefore his person, and nature, and what he hath done and suffered for you, and what he is to you, and what he will be, and how he is fitted to the full supply of all your necessities.

*Direct. 8.* If you mean indeed to Turn and Live, ‘Do it speedily without delay.’ If you be not willing to Turn to-day, you will not be willing to do it at all. Remember you are all this while in your blood; under the guilt of many thousand sins, and under God’s wrath, and you stand at the very brink of hell; there is but a step between you and death. And this is not a case for a man that is well in his wits to be quiet in. Up therefore presently, and fly as for

<sup>d</sup> Acts ix. 19. 26. Psal. xv. 4.

<sup>e</sup> John xiv. 6.

<sup>f</sup> Acts iv. 12.

your lives; as you would be gone out of you house if it were all on fire over your heads. O if you did but know what continual danger you live in, and what daily unspeakable loss you sustain, and what a safer and sweeter life you might live, you would not stand trifling, but presently Turn. Multitudes miscarry that wilfully delay when they are convinced that it must be done. Your lives are short and uncertain; and what a case are you in, if you die before you thoroughly Turn! You have staid too late already; and wronged God too long; sin getteth strength and rooting; while you delay, your conversion will grow more hard and doubtful. You have much to do, and therefore put not all off to the last, lest God forsake you, and give you up to yourselves, and then you are undone for ever.

*Direct. 9.* If you will Turn and Live, do it unreservedly, absolutely and universally. Think not to capitulate with Christ, and divide your heart between him and the world, and to part with some sins and keep the rest: and to let go that which your flesh can spare. This is but self-deluding: you must in heart and resolution forsake all that you have, or else you cannot be his disciples<sup>g</sup>. If you will not take God and heaven for your portion, and lay all below at the feet of Christ, but you must needs also have your good things here, and have an earthly portion, and God and glory is not enough for you; it is in vain to dream of salvation on these terms; for it will not be. If you seem never so religious, if yet it be but a carnal righteousness, and the flesh's prosperity, or pleasure, or safety, be still excepted in your devotedness to God; this is as certain a way to death, as open profaneness, though it be more plausible.

*Direct. 10.* If you will Turn and Live, do it resolvedly, and not stand still deliberating, as if it were a doubtful case. Stand not wavering, as if you were yet uncertain, whether God or the flesh be the better master: whether heaven or hell be the better end; or whether sin or holiness be the better way: but away with your former lusts, and presently, habitually, and fixedly resolve: be not one day of one mind, and the next of another; but be at a point with all the world, and resolvedly give up yourselves, and all you have, to God. Now, while you are reading or hearing this, re-

<sup>g</sup> Luke xiv. 26. 33.

solve. Before you sleep another night, resolve. Before you stir from the place, resolve. Before satan hath time to take you off, resolve. You will never turn indeed till you do resolve; and that with a firm, unchangeable resolution. So much for the Directions.

And now I have done my part in this work, that you may Turn at the call of God and Live. What will become of it, I cannot tell. I have cast the seed at God's command; but it is not in my power to give the increase. I can go no farther with my message, I cannot bring it to your hearts, nor make it work: I cannot do your parts for you to entertain it, and consider of it; nor can I do God's part, by opening your heart, to cause you to entertain it; nor can I shew you heaven or hell to your eyesight, nor give you new and tender hearts. If I knew what more to do for your conversion, I hope I should do it.

But O thou that art the gracious Father of Spirits, thou hast sworn thou delightest not in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn and live, deny not thy blessing to these persuasions and directions, and suffer not thine enemies to triumph in thy sight; and the great deceiver of souls to prevail over thy Son, thy Spirit, and thy Word. O pity poor unconverted sinners, that have no hearts to pity or help themselves: command the blind to see, and the deaf to hear, and the dead to live, and let not sin and death be able to resist thee. Awaken the secure: resolve the unresolved: confirm the wavering: and let the eyes of sinners, that read these lines, be next employed in weeping over their sins; and bring them to themselves, and to thy Son, before their sins have brought them to perdition. If thou say but the word, these poor endeavours shall prosper, to the winning many a soul to their everlasting joy, and thine everlasting glory. Amen.

*Five Prayers: one for Families: one for a Penitent Sinner: one for the Lord's day: one for Children and Servants: one in the method of the Lord's Prayer, being an Exposition of it: for the use of those only who need such helps.*

Two reasons moved me to annex these prayers; 1. I observe that abundance of people, who have some good desires,



do forbear, through disability, to worship God in their families, who I hope would do it, if they had some helps. And though there be many such extant, yet few of these poor families have the books, and I can give them my own at a little cheaper rate, than I can buy others to give them.

2. Some that seem to have been brought to true repentance and newness of life, by God's blessing, on the reading of my books, have earnestly entreated me to write them a form of prayer for their families, because long disuse hath left them unable to pray before others.

For the service of God, and the good of men, I am contented to bear the censures of those who account all forms of book-prayers to be sin; for in an age when pride (the father), and ignorance (the mother), hath bred superstition (the daughter), and taught men to think that God as fondly valueth their several modes of speaking to him, as they do themselves, and thinketh as contemptuously of the contrary as they, the question whether form or no form, book or no book, hath been resolved unto such tragical and direful effects, that I were too tender, if a censure should discourage me.

### *A Prayer for Families, Morning and Evening.*

Almighty, all-seeing, and most gracious God, the world and all therein, is made, maintained and ordered by thee: thou art everywhere present, being more than the soul of all the world. Though thou art revealed in thy glory to those only that are in heaven, thy grace is still at work on earth to prepare men for that glory: thou madest us not as the beasts that perish, but with reasonable, immortal souls, to know, and seek, and serve thee here, and then to live with all the blessed in the everlasting sight of thy heavenly glory, and the pleasures of thy perfect love, and praise. But we are ashamed to think how foolishly and sinfully we have forgotten and neglected our God and our souls, and our hopes of a blessed immortality, and have overmuch minded the things of this visible, transitory world, and the prosperity and pleasure of this corruptible flesh, which we know must turn to rottenness and dust. Thou gavest us a law which was just and good, to guide us in the only way to life, and

when by sin we had undone ourselves, thou gavest us a Saviour, even thy Eternal Word made man, who by his holy life and bitter sufferings reconciled us to thee, and both purchased salvation for us, and revealed it to us, better than an angel from heaven could have done, if thou hadst sent him to us sinners on such a message: but alas, how light have we set by our Redeemer! and by all that love which thou hast manifested by him, and how little have we studied and understood, and less obeyed that covenant of grace which thou hast made by him to lost mankind!

But O God, be merciful to us vile and miserable sinners; forgive the sins of our natural depravity and the follies of our youth, and all the ignorance, negligence, omissions and commissions of our lives: and give us true repentance for them, or else we know that thou wilt not forgive them. Our life is but as a shadow that passeth away, and it is but as a moment till we leave this world, and appear before thee to give up our account, and to speed for ever as here we have prepared. Should we die before thou hast turned our hearts from this sinful flesh and world to thee by true faith and repentance, we shall be lost for evermore. O woe to us that ever we were born, if thou forgive not our sins, and make us not holy before this short, uncertain life be at an end: had we all the riches and pleasures of this world, they would shortly leave us in the greater sorrows. We know that all our life is but the time which thy mercy allotteth us to prepare for death; therefore we should not put off our repentance and preparation to a sick bed: but now Lord, as if it were our last and dying words, we earnestly beg thy pardoning and sanctifying grace, through the merits and intercession of our Redeemer: O thou that hast pitied and saved so many millions of miserable sinners, pity and save us also, that we may glorify thy grace for ever; surely thou delightest not in the death of sinners, but rather that they return and live: hadst thou been unwilling to shew mercy, thou wouldst not have ransomed us at so precious a price, and still entreat us to be reconciled unto thee, we have no cause to distrust thy truth or goodness, but we are afraid lest unbelief, and pride, and hypocrisy, and a worldly, fleshly mind, should be our ruin. O save us from satan, and this tempting world, but especially from ourselves: teach us to

deny all ungodliness and fleshly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world. Let it be our chiefest daily work to please thee, and to lay up a treasure in heaven, and to make sure of a blessed life with Christ, and quietly to trust thee with soul and body. Make us faithful in our callings, and our duties to one another, and to all men, to our superiors, equals and inferiors : bless the king, and all in authority, that we may live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty : give wise, holy, and peaceable pastors to all the churches of Christ, and holy and peaceable minds to the people : convert the heathen and infidel nations of the world ; and cause us, and all thy people to seek first the hallowing of thy name, the coming of thy kingdom, the doing of thy will on earth as it is done in heaven : give us our daily bread, even all things necessary to life and godliness, and let us be therewith content. Forgive us our daily sins, and let thy love and mercy constrain us to love thee above all ; and for thy sake to love our neighbours as ourselves, and in all our dealings, to do justly and mercifully, as we would have others do by us. Keep us from hurtful temptations, from sin, and from thy judgments, and from the malice of our spiritual and corporal enemies ; and let our thoughts, affections, passions, words, and actions, be governed by thy word and Spirit to thy glory : make all our religion and obedience pleasant to us ; and let our souls be so delighted in the praises of thy kingdom, thy power, and thy glory, that it may secure and sweeten our labour by day, and our rest by night, and keep us in a longing and joyful hope of the heavenly glory : and let the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God our Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us now and for ever. Amen.

*A Confession and Prayer for a Penitent Sinner.*

O most great, most wise and gracious God, though thou hatest all the workers of iniquity, and canst not be reconciled unto sin ; yet through the mediation of thy blessed Son, with pity behold this miserable sinner who casteth himself down at the footstool of thy grace : had I lived to those high and holy ends, for which I was created and redeemed,



I might now have come to thee in the boldness and confidence of a child, in assurance of thy love and favour; but I have played the fool and the rebel against thee! I have wilfully forgotten the God that made me, and the Saviour that redeemed me, and the endless glory which thou didst set before me: I forgot the business which I was sent for into the world; and have lived as if I had been made for nothing, but to pass a few days in fleshly pleasure, and pamper a carcase for the worms: I wilfully forgot what it is to be a man, who had reason given him to rule his flesh, and to know his God, and to foresee his death, and the state of immortality: and I made my reason a servant to my senses, and lived too like the beasts that perish. O the precious time which I have lost, which all the world cannot call back! O the calls of grace, which I have neglected! O the calling of God, which I have resisted! The wonderful love which I unthankfully rejected! And the manifold mercies which I have abused, and turned into wantonness and sin! How deep is the guilt which I have contracted! And how great are the comforts which I have lost! I might have lived all this while in the love of thee my gracious God; and in the delight of thy holy word and ways! In the daily sweet foresight of heaven, and in the joy of the Holy Ghost, if I would have been ruled by thy righteous laws: but I have hearkened to the flesh, and to this wicked and deceitful world, and have preferred a short and sinful life before thy love and endless glory.

Alas, what have I been doing since I came into the world! Folly and sin have taken up my time. I am ashamed to look back upon the years that I have spent; and to think of the temptations that I have yielded to. Alas, what trifles have enticed me from my God! How little have I had for the holy pleasures which I have lost! Like Esau, I have profanely sold my birthright for one morsel, to please my fancy, my appetite, and my lust; I have set light by all the joys of heaven; I have unkindly despised the goodness of my Maker; I have slighted the love and grace of my Redeemer; I have resisted thy Holy Spirit, silenced my own conscience, and grieved thy ministers, and my own faithful friends, and have brought myself into this woeful case,

wherein I am a shame and burden to myself, and God is my terror, who should be only my hope and joy.

Thou knowest my secret sins, which are unknown to men; thou knowest all their aggravations. My sins O Lord, have found me out. Fears and sorrows overwhelm me! If I look behind me, I see my wickedness pursue my soul, and as an army, ready to overtake me, and devour me. If I look before me I see the just and dreadful judgment, and I know that thou wilt not acquit the guilty. If I look within me, I see a dark, defiled heart. If I look without me, I see a world still offering fresh temptations to deceive me. If I look above me, I see thine offended dreadful Majesty; and if I look beneath me, I see the place of endless torment, and the company which I deserve to suffer with. I am afraid to live, and more afraid to die.

But yet when I look to thy abundant mercy, and to thy Son, and to thy covenant, I have hope. Thy goodness is equal to thy greatness; thou art love itself, and thy mercy is over all thy works. So wonderfully hath thy Son condescended unto sinners, and done and suffered so much for their salvation, that if yet I should question thy willingness to forgive, I should but add to all my sins, by dishonouring that matchless mercy which thou dost design to glorify. Yea more, I find upon record in thy word, that through Christ thou hast made a covenant of grace, and act of oblivion, in which thou hast already conditionally, but freely pardoned all; granting them forgiveness of all their sins, without any exception, whenever by unfeigned faith and repentance, they turn to thee by Jesus Christ. And thy present mercy doth increase my hope, in that thou hast not cut me off, nor utterly left me to the hardness of my heart, but shewest me my sin and danger, before I am past remedy.

O, therefore, behold this prostrate sinner, which with the publican smiteth on his breast, and is ashamed to look up towards heaven: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." I confess not only my original sin, but the follies, and furies of my youth, my manifold sins of ignorance and knowledge, of negligence and wilfulness, of omission and commission; against the law of nature, and against the grace and Gospel of thy Son; forgive and save me, O my God, for thy abundant mercy, and for the sacrifice and merit of thy Son, and

for the promise of forgiveness which thou hast made through him, for in these alone is all my trust. Condemn me not who condemn myself. O thou that hast opened so precious a fountain for sin, and for uncleanness, wash me thoroughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin. Though thy justice might send me presently to hell, let mercy triumph in my salvation. Thou hast no pleasure in the death of sinners, but rather that they repent and live: if my repentance be not such as thou requirest, O soften this hardened, flinty heart, and give me repentance unto life. Turn me to thyself, O God of my salvation, and cause thy face to shine upon me. "Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right Spirit within me." Meet not this poor, returning prodigal in thy wrath, but with the embracement of thy tender mercies. Cast me not from thy presence, and sentence me not to depart from thee with the workers of iniquity. Thou who didst patiently endure me when I despised thee, refuse me not now I seek unto thee, and here in the dust implore thy mercy. Thou didst convert and pardon a wicked Manasseh, and a persecuting Saul. And there are multitudes in heaven, who were once thine enemies. Glorify also thy superabounding grace, in the forgiveness of my abounding sins.

I ask not for liberty to sin again, but for deliverance from the sinning nature. O give me the renewing Spirit of thy Son, which may sanctify all the powers of my soul. Let me have the new and heavenly birth, and nature, and the spirit of adoption to reform me to thine image, that I may be holy as thou art holy. Illuminate me with the saving knowledge of thyself, and thy Son Jesus Christ. O fill me with thy love, that my heart may be wholly set upon thee; and the remembrance of thee be my chief delight: let the freest and sweetest of my thoughts run after thee: and the freest and sweetest of my discourse be of thee, and of thy glory, and of thy kingdom, and of thy word and ways! O let my treasure be laid up in heaven, and there let me daily and delightfully converse. Make it the great and daily business of my devoted soul, to please thee, and to honour thee, to promote thy kingdom, and to do thy will! Put thy fear into my heart, that I may never depart from thee. This world hath had too much of my heart already; let it now be



crucified to me, and I to it, by the cross of Christ: let me not love it, nor the things which are therein; but having food and raiment, cause me therewith to be content. Destroy in me all fleshly lusts, that I may not live after the flesh, but the Spirit. Keep me from the snares of wicked company, and from the counsel and ways of the ungodly. Bless me with the hopeful communion of the saints, and with all the means that thou hast appointed to further our sanctification and salvation. O that my ways were so directed, that I might keep thy statutes! Let me never return again to folly, nor forget the covenant of my God: help me to quench the first motion of sin, and to abhor all sinful desires and thoughts; and let thy Spirit strengthen me against all temptations; that I may conquer and endure to the end. Prepare me for sufferings, and for death, and judgment, that when I must leave this sinful world, I may yield up my departing soul with joy into the faithful hands of my dear Redeemer, that I be not numbered with the ungodly, which die in their unpardoned sin, and pass into everlasting misery; but may be found in Christ, having the righteousness which is of God by faith: and may attain to the resurrection of the just: that so the remembrance of the sin and miseries from which thou hast delivered me, may farther my perpetual thanks and praise to thee my Creator, my Redeemer, and my Sanctifier.

And O that thou wouldst call and convert the miserable nations of idolaters and infidels, and the multitudes of ungodly hypocrites, who have the name of Christians, and not the truth, and power, and life. O send forth labourers into thy harvest and let not satan hinder them. Prosper thy Gospel, and the kingdom of thy Son, that sinners may more abundantly be converted to thee, and this earth may be made like unto heaven; that when thou hast gathered us all into unity with Christ, we may all, with perfect love and joy, ascribe to thee the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

*A Form of Praise and Prayer for the Lord's-day.*

Glorious Jehovah, while angels and perfected spirits are praising thee in the presence of thy glory, thou hast allowed

and commanded us to take our part in the presence of thy grace : we have the same most holy God to praise ; and though we see thee not, our Head and Saviour seeth thee, and our faith discerneth thee in the glass of thy holy works and word. Though we are sinners, and unworthy, and cannot touch those holy things, without the marks of our pollution ; yet have we a great High Priest with thee, who was separated from sinners, holy, harmless, and undefiled, who appeareth for us, in the merits of his spotless life and sacrifice, and by whose hands only we dare presume to present a sacrifice to the most holy God. And thou hast ordained this day of holy rest, as a type and means of that heavenly rest with the triumphant church to which we aspire, and for which we hope. Thou didst accept their lower praise on earth, before they celebrated thy praise in glory : accept ours also by the same Mediator.

Glory be to thee, O God in the highest : on earth peace, goodwill towards men. Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, who wast, and art, and art to come ; Eternal, without beginning or end ; Immense, without all bounds or measure ; the Infinite Spirit, Father, Word, and Holy Ghost. The infinite Life, Understanding, and Will, infinitely powerful, wise, and good ; of thee, and through thee, and to thee are all things : to thee be glory for evermore. All thy works declare thy glory ; for thy glorious perfections appear on all, and for thy glory, and the pleasure of thy holy will, didst thou create them. The heavens, and all the hosts thereof ; the sun and all the glorious stars ; the fire with its motion, light and heat ; the earth and all that dwell thereon, with all its sweet and glorious ornaments ; the air and all the meteors ; the great deeps and all that swim therein ; all are the preachers of thy praise, and shew forth the great Creator's glory. How great is that power which made so great a world of nothing ; which with wonderful swiftness moved those great and glorious luminaries, which in a moment send forth the influences of their motion, light and heat through all the air, to sea and earth ; thy powerful life giveth life to all ; and preserveth this frame of nature which thou hast made. How glorious is that wisdom which ordereth all things, and assigneth to all their place and office, and by its perfect law maintaineth the beauty and harmony

of all ; how glorious is that Goodness and Love, which made all good and very good !

We praise and glorify thee our Lord and Owner ; for we and all things are thine own. We praise and glorify thee our King and Ruler ; for we are thy subjects, and our perfect obedience is thy due ; just are all thy laws and judgments ; true and sure is all thy word. We praise and glorify thee, our great Benefactor ; in thee we live, and move, and are ; all that we are, or have, or can do, is wholly from thee, the Cause of all ; and all is for thee, for thou art our End. Delightfully to love thee, is our greatest duty, and our only felicity ; for thou art love itself, and infinitely amiable.

When man by sin did turn away his heart from thee, believed the tempter against thy truth, obeyed his senses against thy authority and wisdom, and forsaking thy Fatherly love and goodness, became an idol to himself, thou didst not use him according to his desert ; when we forsook thee, thou didst not utterly forsake us ; when we had lost ourselves, and by sin became thine enemies, condemned by thy law ; thy mercy pitied us, and gave us the promise of a Redeemer, who in the fulness of time did assume our nature, fulfilled thy law, and suffered for our sins, and conquering death, did rise again, ascended to heaven, and is our glorified Head and Intercessor. Him hast thou exalted to be a Prince and Saviour to give us repentance and remission of sins. In him thou hast given pardon and justification, reconciliation and adoption, by a covenant of grace, to every penitent believer. Of enemies, and the heirs of death, thou hast made us sons and heirs of life.

We are the brands whom thou hast plucked out of the fire ; we are the captives of satan whom thou hast redeemed ; we are the condemned sinners, whom thou hast pardoned ; we praise thee, we glorify thee our merciful God, and gracious Redeemer. Our souls have now refuge from thy revenging wrath. Thy promise is sure : satan, and the world, and death are overcome : our Lord is risen ; he is risen, and we shall rise through him. O death, where is thy sting ! O grave, where is thy victory ! Our Saviour is ascended to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God ; and we shall ascend ; to his hands we may commit our departing



souls ; our Head is glorified, and it is his will and promise that we shall be with him where he is to see his glory ; he hath sealed us thereunto by his Holy Spirit ; we were dead in sins, and he hath quickened us ; we were dark in ignorance, and unbelief, and he hath enlightened us ; we were unholy and carnal, sold under sin, and he hath sanctified our wills, and killed our concupiscence. We praise and glorify this Spirit of life, with the Father and the Son from whom he is sent to be life, and light, and love to our dead, and dark, and disaffected souls. We are created, and redeemed, and sanctified for thy holy love, and praise, and service : O let these be the very nature of our souls, and the employment and pleasure of all our lives ! O, perfect thy weak and languid graces in us, that our love and praise may be more perfect ! We thank thee for thy word, and sacred ordinances, for the comfort of the holy assemblies and communion of the saints, and for the mercy of these thy holy days. But let not thy praise be here confined ; but be our daily life and bread, and work.

Fain we would praise thee with more holy and more joyful souls ; but how can we do it with so weak a faith and so great darkness and strangeness to thee ? With so little assurance of thy favour and our salvation ? Can we rightly thank thee for the grace which we are still in doubt of ? Fain we would be more like to those blessed souls who praise thee without our fears and dulness : but how can it be, while we love thee so little, and have so little taste and feeling of thy love ? And while this load of sin doth press us down, and we are imprisoned in the remnant of our carnal affections ? O kill this pride and selfishness, these lusts and passions ! Destroy this unbelief and darkness, and all our sins, which are the enemies of us, and of thy praise. Make us more holy and heavenly ; and O bring us nearer thee in faith and love, that we may be more suitable to the heavenly employment of thy praise.

Vouchsafe more of thy Spirit to all thy churches and servants in the world ; that as their darkness, and selfishness, and imperfections, have defiled, and divided, and weakened them, and made them a scandal and hardening to infidels ; so their knowledge, self-denial and impartial love, may truly reform, unite and strengthen them ; that the glory of

their holiness may win the unbelieving world to Christ. O let not satan keep up still so large a kingdom of tyranny, ignorance and wickedness in the earth, and make this world as the suburbs of hell : but let the earth be more conformable to heaven, in the glorifying of thy holy name, the advancing of thy kingdom, and the doing of thy just and holy will. Let thy way be known upon earth, and thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God, let all the people praise thee ! Yea, give thy Son the heathen for his inheritance, and let his Gospel enlighten the dark, forsaken nations of the earth. Let every knee bow to him, and every tongue confess that he is Christ, to their salvation and thy glory. Provide and send forth the messengers of thy grace through all the earth. Deliver all the churches from sin, division and oppression. Let thy holy word and worship continue in these kingdoms, whilst this world endureth. Bless the king and all in authority, with all that wisdom, justice and holiness, which are needful to his own and his subjects' safety, peace and welfare. Let every congregation among us have burning and shining lights, that the ignorant and ungodly perish not for want of teaching and exhortation. And open men's hearts to receive thy word, and cause them to know the day of their visitation. Be merciful to the afflicted, in sickness, dangers, wants or sorrows, according to thy goodness and their necessities. Let all the prayers and praises of the faithful throughout the world sent up this day in the name of our common Mediator, by him be presented acceptable unto thee ; notwithstanding the imperfections and blemishes that are on them, and the censures, divisions and injuries, which in their frowardness they are guilty of against each other : let them enter as one in Christ our Head, who are too sadly and stiffly distant among themselves. Prepare us all for that world of peace, where the harmony of universal love, and praise shall never be interrupted by sins, or griefs, or fears, or discord ; but shall be everlastingly perfect to our joy and to thy glory, through our glorified Mediator, who taught us when we pray to say, Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven, give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that

trespass against us : And lead us not into temptation ; but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever. Amen.

*A short Prayer for Children and Servants.*

Ever-living and most glorious God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost ! Infinite is thy power, thy wisdom, and thy goodness ! Thou art the Maker of all the world, the Redeemer of lost and sinful man, and the Sanctifier of the elect ! Thou hast made me a living, reasonable soul, placed awhile in this flesh and world to know, and love, and serve thee, my Creator, with all my heart, and mind, and strength, that I might obtain the reward of the heavenly glory. This should have been the greatest care, and business, and pleasure of all my life : I was bound to it by thy law : I was invited by thy mercy. And in my baptism I was devoted to this holy life, by a solemn covenant and vow. But alas, I have proved too unfaithful to that covenant : I have forgotten and neglected the God, the Saviour, and the Sanctifier, to whom I was engaged : and have too much served the devil, the world and flesh, which I renounced : I was born in sin, and sinfully I have lived. I have been too careless of my immortal soul, and of the great work for which I was created and redeemed : I have spent much of my precious time in vanity, in minding and pleasing this corruptible flesh : and I have hardened my heart against those instructions, by which thy Spirit, and my teachers, and my own conscience, did call upon me to repent and turn to thee.

And now, Lord, my convinced soul doth confess, that I have deserved to be forsaken by thee, and given over to my lust and folly, and to be cast out of thy glorious presence into damnation. But seeing thou hast given a Saviour to the world, and made a pardoning and gracious law, promising forgiveness and salvation through his merits, to every true penitent believer, I thankfully accept the mercy of thy covenant in Christ ; I humbly confess my sin and guiltiness ; I cast my miserable soul upon thy grace, and sacrifice, and intercession of my Saviour. O pardon all the sins of my corrupted heart and life ; and as a reconciled Father, take me to be thy child ; and give me thy renewing Spirit, to be



in me a principle of holy life, and light, and love, and thy seal and witness, that I am thine. Let him quicken my dead and hardened heart; let him enlighten my dark, unbelieving mind by clearer knowledge and firm belief; let him turn my will to the ready obedience of thy holy will; let him reveal to my soul the wonders of thy love in Christ, and fill it with love to thee and my Redeemer, and to all thy holy word and works, till all my sinful carnal love be quenched in me, and my sinful pleasures turned into a sweet delight in God; give me self-denial, humility, and lowliness, and save me from the great and hateful sins of selfishness, worldliness, and pride. O set my heart upon the heavenly glory, where I hope, ere long, to live with Christ and all his holy ones, in the joyful sight, and love, and praise of thee, the God of love, for ever. Deny me not any of those helps and mercies, which are needful to my sanctification and salvation. And cause me to live in a continual readiness for a safe and comfortable death. For what would it profit me to win all the world, and lose my soul, my Saviour, and my God?

*Additions for Children.*

Let thy blessings be upon my parents and governors, cause them to instruct and educate me in thy fear, and cause me with thankfulness to receive their instructions: and to love, honour, and obey them in obedience to thee. Keep me from the snares of evil company, temptations, and youthful pleasures, and let me be a companion of them that fear thee. Let my daily delight be to meditate on thy law; and let me never have the mark of the ungodly, to be a lover of pleasures more than of God. Furnish my youth with those treasures of wisdom and holiness, which may be daily increased and used to thy glory.

*Additions for Servants.*

And as thou hast made me a servant, make me conscionable and faithful in my place and trust, and careful of my master's goods and business, as I would be if it were my own. Make me submissive and obedient to my governors; keep me from self-will and pride, from murmuring and un-

reverent speeches, from falsehood, slothfulness, and all deceit. That I might not be an eye-servant, pleasing my lust and fleshly appetite; but may cheerfully and willingly do my duty, as believing that thou art the revenger of all unfaithfulness; and may do my service not only as unto man, but as to the Lord, expecting from thee my chief reward.

All this I beg and hope for, on the account of the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ, concluding in the words which he hath taught us. Our Father, which art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name: Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread: And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

*A Prayer for the Morning, in the method of the Lord's Prayer, being an Exposition of it.*

Most glorious God, who art power, and wisdom, and goodness itself, the Creator of all things; the Owner, the Ruler, and the Benefactor of the world, but especially of thy church and chosen ones. Though by sin original and actual we were thy enemies, the slaves of satan and our flesh, and under thy displeasure and the condemnation of thy law, yet thy children, redeemed by Jesus Christ thy Son, and regenerated by thy Holy Spirit, have leave to call thee their reconciled Father. For by thy covenant of grace, thou hast given them thy Son to be their Head, their Teacher, and their Saviour. And in him thou hast pardoned, adopted, and sanctified them; sealing and preparing them by thy Holy Spirit for thy celestial kingdom, and beginning in them that holy life, and light, and love, which shall be perfected with thee in everlasting glory. O with what wondrous love hast thou loved us, that of rebels we should be made the sons of God! Thou hast advanced us to this dignity that we might be devoted wholly to thee as thine own, and might delightfully obey thee, and entirely love thee with all our heart! And so might glorify thee here and for ever.

O cause both us, and all thy churches, and all the world to hallow thy great and holy name! And to live to thee

as our ultimate end ! that thy shining image on holy souls may glorify thy divine perfection.

And cause both us and all the earth, to cast off the tyranny of satan and the flesh, and to acknowledge thy supreme authority, and to become the kingdoms of thee and thy Son Jesus, by a willing and absolute subjection. O perfect thy kingdom of grace in ourselves and in the world, and hasten the kingdom of glory.

And cause us and thy churches, and all the people of the earth, no more to be ruled by the lusts of the flesh, and their erroneous conceits, and by selfwill, which is the idol of the wicked ; but by thy purest wisdom and holy will revealed in thy laws, make known thy word to all the world, and send them the messengers of grace and peace ; and cause men to understand, believe, and obey, the Gospel of salvation. And that, with such holiness, unity, and love, that the earth, which is now too like to hell, may be made like unto heaven ; and not only thy scattered, imperfect flock, but those also who in their carnal and ungodly minds do now refuse a holy life, and think thy words and ways too strict, may desire to imitate even the heavenly church ; where thou art obeyed, and loved, and praised, with high delight, in harmony and perfection.

And because our being is the subject of our well-being, maintain us in the life, which thou hast here given us, until the work of life be finished ; and give us such health of mind and body, and such protection, and supply of all our wants, as shall best fit us for our duty ; and make us contented with our daily bread, and patient if we want. And save us from the love of riches, honours, and pleasures of this world, and the pride, and idleness, and sensuality which they cherish ; and cause us to serve thy Providence by our diligent labour, and to serve thee faithfully with all that thou givest us ; and let us not make provision for the flesh, to satisfy its desires and lusts.

And we beseech thee of thy mercy, through the sacrifice and propitiation of thy beloved Son, forgive us all our sins, original and actual, from our birth to this hour ; our omissions of duty, and committing of what thou didst forbid ; our sins of heart, and word, and deed ; our sinful thoughts and affections, our sinful passions and discontents ; our se-



cret and our open sins; our sins of negligence and ignorance, and rashness; but especially our sins against knowledge and conscience, which have made the deepest guilt and wounds. Spare us, O Lord, and let not our sin so find us out as to be our ruin; but let us so find it out as truly to repent and turn to thee! Especially punish us not with the loss of thy grace! Take not thy Holy Spirit from us, and deny us not his assistance and holy operations. Seal to us by that Spirit the pardon of our sins, and lift up the light of thy countenance upon us, and give us the joy of thy favour and salvation. And let thy love and mercy to us fill us not only with thankfulness to thee, but with love and mercy to our brethren and our enemies, that we may heartily forgive them that do us wrong, as through thy grace we hope to do.

And for the time to come, suffer us not to cast ourselves wilfully into temptations, but carefully to avoid them, and resolutely to resist and conquer what we cannot avoid; and O mortify those inward sins and lusts, which are our constant and most dangerous temptations. And let us not be tempted by satan or the world, or tried by thy judgments, above the strength which thy grace shall give us. Save us from a fearless confidence in our own strength; and let us not dally with the snare, nor taste the bait, nor play with the fire of wrath. But cause us to fear and depart from evil; lest before we are aware, we be entangled and overcome, and wounded with our guilt and with thy wrath, and our end should be worse than our beginning. Especially save us from those radical sins of error and unbelief, pride, hypocrisy, hardheartedness, sensuality, slothfulness, and the love of this present world, and the loss of our love to thee, to thy kingdom and thy ways.

And save us from the malice of satan and of wicked men, and from the evils which our sins would bring upon us.

And as we crave all this from thee, we humbly tender our praises with our future service to thee! Thou art the King of all the world, and more than the life of all the living! Thy kingdom is everlasting; wise, and just, and merciful, is thy government. Blessed are they that are faithful subjects; but who hath hardened himself against thee, and hath prospered? The whole creation proclaimeth thy perfection. But it is heaven where the blessed see thy

glory, and the glory of our Redeemer, where the angels and saints behold thee, admire thee, adore thee, love thee, and praise thee with triumphant, joyful songs, the holy, holy, holy God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who was, and is, and is to come ; of thee, and through thee, and to thee are all things. To thee be glory for ever. Amen.

### *The Creed.*

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell ; the third day he rose again from the dead ; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father Almighty ; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost ; the holy catholic church ; the communion of saints ; the forgiveness of sins ; the resurrection of the body ; and the life everlasting. Amen.

### *The Ten Commandments.*

I. I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other God before me.

II. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth ; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them ; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

III. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain ; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

IV. Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy ; six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work : but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, in it thou shalt not do

any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day ; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath-day, and hallowed it.

V. Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

VI. Thou shalt not kill.

VII. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

VIII. Thou shalt not steal.

IX. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

X. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house ; thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

END OF THE CALL TO THE UNCONVERTED.



# NOW OR NEVER.

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THE HOLY, SERIOUS, DILIGENT BELIEVER JUSTIFIED, ENCOURAGED, EXCITED, AND DIRECTED. AND THE OPPOSERS AND NEGLECTERS CONVINCED BY THE LIGHT OF SCRIPTURE AND REASON.

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TO BE COMMUNICATED BY SUCH AS WANT ABILITY OR OPPORTUNITY THEMSELVES TO PLEAD THE CAUSE OF SERIOUS HOLINESS FOR MEN'S CONVICTION.

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"But wisdom is justified of all her children."

LUKE vii. 35.

Nihil est ad defendendum puritate tutius: nihil ad dicendum veritate facilius.

AMBROS.



## PREFACE.

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It is a question, more boldly than accurately debated by many, 'Whether a man may not be saved in any religion, that is faithful to the principles of it by serious, diligent practice?' The true solution is this: religion is that which men hold and do to serve and please God. 1. If men make themselves a religion of serving idols or devils instead of God. 2. Or if they place their service to God himself in things that are evil (as what evil is there that some men have not brought into their religion, and fathered upon God?) the more diligent such men are in their religion, the more they sin. 3. Or if they make themselves a religion of irrational, ludicrous ceremonies, their greatest diligence in this will not save them. 4. Or if they hold all the essentials of the true religion, except some one, it cannot save them while one thing is wanting which is essential to that religion, and so necessary to salvation (which is the case of real heretics): for they are not indeed of that religion, if they want that which is essential to it. 5. Or if they hold all that is essential to the true religion only notionally, and hold any thing with it practically, which is contradictory and inconsistent with it, the soundness of the notional belief will not save them from the mortal poison of their practical heresy or error.

But, 1. Whosoever holdeth all that is necessary to salvation, and is serious and diligent in living according thereunto, shall be saved, whatever error he holdeth with it. For if he be serious and diligent in the practice of all things necessary to salvation, he hath all that is necessary to salvation, viz. In belief and practice; and it must needs follow, that his errors are either not contradictory to the things necessary which he holdeth and practiseth, or that he holdeth not those errors practically but notionally, as an opinion, or uneffectual cogitation in a dream, which provoketh not to



action : and in such a case the error keepeth no man from salvation.

What is necessary to be believed by them that never hear the Gospel, it so little concerneth us to know, that God hath not thought meet to make it so plain to us, as things that more concern ourselves. But as it is certain, that without the atonement, satisfaction, and reconciliation made by Christ, and without new terms of grace to be judged by, and without his grace for the performance of their part, no man can be saved (that hath the use of reason), so there is so much knowledge necessary to salvation, as is necessary, to engage the heart to love God above all, and sincerely to obey his revealed will, and to prefer the life to come before the transitory pleasures of this life. Now if any man can prove to me, that those that never heard the Gospel, can thus love God, and the life to come, and obey sincerely, without the knowledge of the person, life, death, resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the declaration of the attractive love and goodness of God in him, and in the work of our redemption, then I should believe that such negative infidels may be saved ; for God cannot damn a sanctified soul, that sincerely loveth him. But if the discovery of the love of God in our redemption be so necessary a moral means to engage the heart (now corrupted by sin and creature-love) to the true love of God, that this love cannot be wrought without it ; or if Christ give not his Spirit to produce the love of God in any but those that hear the Gospel, and believe in him, then no such persons can be saved by their religion. For Christ is the way to the Father, and no man cometh to the Father but by him ; and the love of God is absolutely and of itself necessary to salvation ; and faith in Christ is so far necessary to salvation, as it is necessary to bring men to the love of God, as pardoning sin and reconciled to them.

But if any should never so confidently conclude, that some that hear not of Christ may be saved, yet he must needs confess that the want of this clear and great discovery of the love and goodness of God, in his pardoning grace, and of the glorious life which he hath prepared for us, must needs make the love of God a very rare and difficult thing, and consequently their salvation rare and difficult, in comparison of ours.

The Christian faith, is, 'The believing an everlasting life of happiness to be given by God (with the pardon of all sin) as procured by the sufferings and merits of Jesus Christ, to all that are sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and do persevere in love to God and to each other, and in a holy and heavenly conversation.' This is saving faith and Christianity, if we consent as well as assent. All that was necessary to salvation to be believed, was formerly thought to be contained in the creed, and that was the test or symbol of the Christian faith; and the Christian religion is the same, and hath the same rule, and test, and symbol in all ages. But since faction and tyranny, pride and covetousness became the matters of the religion of too many, vice and selfish interest hath commanded them to change the rule of faith by their additions, and to make so much necessary to salvation, as is necessary to their affected universal dominion, and to their commodity and carnal ends. And since faction entered, and hath torn the church into many sects (the Greek, the Roman, the Armenian, the Jacobites, the Abassine, and many more), it seemeth meet to the more tyrannical sect to call these several religions, and to say that every man that differeth from them in any of their opinions or addition, which they please to call articles of faith, is of another religion.

\* And if the word 'Religion' be taken in this sense, and if all that agree in one Christian religion, are said to be of as many religions, as different opinions, in points that some call necessary, then I answer the question thus. He is the true Catholic Christian that hath but one, even the Christian religion: and this is the case of the Protestants, who casting off the additions of Popery, adhere to the primitive

\* And yet when they have divided the church, and damned the greatest part of Christians, and raged with fire and sword against the brethren, they confess themselves that it is no point of faith at all, that it is of Divine right, that the Bishop of Rome is St. Peter's successor, and not only of human right. And must the church be divided, and must be damned for not believing or submitting to a human ordinance? If we be of many religions, is not Popery then a human religion? The very words of Smith Bishop of Chalcedon, the chief of the English Popish clergy are these, "Survey" chap v. 'To us it sufficeth that the Bishop of Rome is St. Peter's successor, and this all the fathers testify, and all the Catholic Church believeth; but whether it be 'jure divino,' or 'humano,' is no point of faith.' And how do their laics here know what is a point of faith, but by the testimony of their priests?

simplicity and unity : if Papists, or any others, corrupt this religion with human additions and innovations, the great danger of these corruptions, is, lest they draw them from the sound belief and serious practice of that ancient Christianity, which we are all agreed in : and (among the Papists, or any other sect) where their corruptions do not thus corrupt their faith and practice in the true essentials, it is certain that those corruptions shall not damn them. For he that truly believeth all things that are essential to Christianity, and liveth accordingly with serious diligence, hath the promise of salvation : and it is certain, that what error that man holdeth, it is either not inconsistent with true Christianity, or not practically, but notionally held, and so not inconsistent as held by him ; for how can that be inconsistent which actually doth consist with it ?

If a Papist or any other sectary do seriously love God, and his brother ; and set his heart upon the life to come, and give up himself to the merits and grace of Jesus Christ, and the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, to be fitted for that glory, and liveth by faith above the world, and mortifieth the desires of the flesh, and liveth wilfully in no known sin, but presseth after further degrees of holiness, I doubt not of the salvation of that person ; no more than of the life of him that hath taken poison but into his mouth and spit it out again, or let down so little as nature and antidotes do expel ; but I will not therefore plead for poison, nor take it, because men may live that thus take it.

Having answered this great question, reader, I am now come up to the subject of my following discourse, and to tell thee that though it be a great question whether serious diligence in a corrupt religion will save a man, it is past all question, and agreed on by all sides, that no religion will save a man, that is not serious, sincere, and diligent in it. If thou be of the truest religion in the world, and art not true thyself to that religion, the religion is good, but it is none of thine. Objectively thou art of a true and good religion, the things in themselves are true and good, but subjectively thou art sincerely of no religion at all ; for if thou art not serious, hearty, and diligent in it, it is certain that thou dost not truly entertain it, and make it thine ; but it is thy books that have the true religion, or thy tongue, or fantasy,



or brain, but not thy heart : and the best meat on thy table, or that goeth no farther than thy mouth, will never feed thee, or preserve thy life. So certain is the salvation of every holy, mortified Christian, and so certain the damnation of every ungodly, worldly, fleshly sensualist ; that I had a thousand-fold rather have my soul in the case of a godly Anabaptist, yea, or a monk, or friar among the Papists, that liveth a truly heavenly life, in the love of God and man, and in a serious, diligent obedience to God, according to his knowledge, than in the case of a Protestant, or whomsoever you can imagine to be rightest in his opinions, that is worldly, and sensual, and a stranger (if not an enemy) to the power and serious practice of his own profest religion, and void of a holy and heavenly heart and life. If ever such a man be saved, the principles of all religion do deceive us.

And certainly such men's hypocrisy doth aggravate their sin, and will increase their misery. So many as there be in the world, that profess themselves Christians, and yet are not serious and diligent in their religion, but are ungodly neglecters or enemies of a holy life, so many hypocrites are in the world. And I wonder that their consciences call them not hypocrites when they stand up at the creed, or profess themselves believers : though the congregation seeth not ' hypocrite ' written in their foreheads, God seeth it written on their hearts, and those that converse with them may see it written in their lives. And yet these men are the most forward to cry out against hypocrites. The devil hath taught it them to stop the suspicion and the chase of conscience, as he hath taught the greatest schismatics or church-dividers (the Papists) to cry out most against schism and division, and pretend to unity. But these shifts do blind none but fools, and forsaken consciences ; and the cheat that is now detected by the wise, will quickly by God be detected before all the world. Till then let them make merry in their deceits : who would envy the drunkard the pleasure of an hour's swinish, sick delight ? This is their portion ; and this is their time : as we have chosen and covenanted for another portion, we are content to stay the time assigned, till God shall tell them and all the world, who was sincere, and who the hypocrite. For our parts, we believe that he is most or least sincere, that is most or least serious in the practice of his own professed religion.

For my part, I must profess that (by the mercy of God) I have made it the work of many a year, to look about me, and think wherein the felicity of man doth indeed consist; and I have long been past doubt (as much as I am that I am a man) that it is not in transitory, sensual delights, and that these are such lean and dry commodities, and pitiful pleasures, leaving men so speedily in a forlorn state, that I am contented that my greatest enemy have my part of them. I have renounced them to God (as any part of my felicity) and I renounce them to men. Let them do with me about these things as God will give them leave. I will have a portion after death, or I will have none.

And the case is so palpable, that it is my admiration that the contrary deceit is consistent with the nature and reason of a man; and that so many gentlemen, and scholars, and persons of an ingenious education, can no better distinguish, and can possibly conquer their reason so easily with the presence of sensual delights, and so easily make nothing of that which will be to-morrow and for ever, merely because it is not to-day. Well, I must say, the wisdom and justice of God is abundantly seen in the government of the world with the liberty of the will, and determining that all men should speed as they choose.

It may be the reader will say, he expected that instead of writing such popular discourses, I should have vindicated myself against the accusations, that in multitudes of libels and pamphlets are scattered abroad against me. But doth he think that man is seriously a Christian that is not more zealous for God, and religion, and the souls of men, than for himself? Have I nothing else to do with my time and labour, but plead a cause of my own, which God will so speedily and effectually plead? Will it not be time enough to be justified at the bar and day of God? I am content that they carry it as they desire till then (were it not more for their own and other men's sakes than mine). Am I like to forsake my life and all for Christ, and endure torments if I were called to it, if I cannot endure to be reviled and slandered by passionate men? Was it nothing that our Lord would not answer for himself, when he was accused before Pilate? Shall they be able to calumniate under the threatenings of the revenge of heaven, and shall I not be able to

be silent under such a promise, as Matt. v. 10—12. ? The servant of the Lord must not strive. Our Lord gave us an example of not reviling again when he was reviled ; he made himself of no reputation, but endured the cross and contradiction of sinners, despising the shame. I confess I think when God's interest, and the good of others doth require it, a man should not be wanting to his own defence, and I have long ago written that which will satisfy the impartial : but when I saw that it is like to tend to heats, and set more on work, I had rather let men call me all the names they can devise, and voluminously accuse me of any thing that malice shall suggest, than do any thing to foment contentions in the church. But if God convince me that it is my duty to detect the calumnies of men, it is a work soon done.

But what good will it do the world for me to open the numerous untruths that other men have published, or to confute every script, when all that I converse with are satisfied already, and believe not the reproachers ; and all the evidence in the world will not satisfy those that will not read it, or are resolved by their malice or interest never to be satisfied ?

For my part, I doubt not but God and their consciences will give them such a confutation, as shall be sufficient to them and me to end the controversy.

My work is to plead the cause of God and holiness against the profane and sensual world, and no further to plead any cause of my own, than is necessary to that. If I must bear the effects of men's displeasure, I had a hundred times rather it were pleading for holiness, and love, and peace, and concord against impiety, uncharitableness, and divisions, than for defending myself, or upon the account of ceremonies or smaller matters. And if for these I bear it, I doubt not of more comfort at the present, much less do I doubt of a better issue than false accusers can expect. We shall be shortly upon even ground : the time is short ; the pleasures of sin, the triumphs of malice, the sufferings of innocency, are but for a moment. I envy them not so short and dark a day : the Judge is at the door that will judge all again, and set all straight, and judge in righteousness. When I am afraid of leaving a noisome and unrighteous world, and ending all my pain and trouble, and being beyond the reach of



malice, then I will fear what man can do. Let them keep me out of heaven, or deprive me of my peace and comfort, if they can. If they fear not the threatenings of God against the malicious and unjust, surely I have less reason to fear their threatenings. When they have done their worst to others, let them save themselves from death if they can: I am devoted to God, and I never yet found cause to repent it: I am resolved to use the utmost of my power for the interest of holiness, charity and peace, and for loyalty to the king, and obedience or patient submission to superiors; and if yet I bear the fruits of fury, let those who insult over sufferers as if they were therefore guilty or miserable, remember that we could have avoided it if we would, and have found the way of applause and prosperity as well as they; and that no man takes that for his misery which he chooseth. If this kind of preaching or writing offend, could not I have avoided it? I am not in love with sufferings from men, nor will I escape them at the rates of God's displeasure. I never think myself in the highest form of Christians, till I am more conformed to the sufferings of Christ, and have endured more than yet I have.

It is the Christians' old apology in Tertullian: "*Quasi non totum quod in nos potestis nostrum sit arbitrium! Certe si velim, Christianus sum; tunc ergo me damnabis, si damnari velim; quam vero quod in me potes, nisi velim non potes, jam mea voluntatis est quod potes, non tuæ potestatis. Proinde et vulgus vane de nostra vexatione gaudet: proinde et nostrum est gaudium quod sibi vendicant, qui malumus damnari quam a Deo excidere. Contra, ibi qui nos oderunt, dolere non gaudere debebant, consecutis nobis quod eligimus.*" Tert. *Apologet.* cap. 30. That is, "As if all that you can do against us were not our own choice (or will). Certainly it is because I will, that I am a Christian; therefore if I will be condemned, thou wilt condemn me. And when that which thou canst do against me, thou canst not do, unless I will, it is not now from thy power that thou canst do it, but from my will; and therefore the vulgar do in vain rejoice at our vexation. And therefore it is our joy, which they challenge to themselves, while we had rather be condemned than fall from God. On the contrary, they that

hate us, should grieve, and not rejoice, while we attain but what we choose."

For my part, if the world will needs be mad, I think both the laughing and the weeping philosopher are more excusable than he that would be over-angry at them, or over-busy in disputing with them. Saith Seneca, "*Quare fers ægri rabiem et phrenetici verba? nempe quia videnter nescire quid faciunt. Quid interest quo quisque vitio fiat imprudens? Sen. de Ira. lib. 3. cap. 26.*" Anger and frenzy are but several ways of a man's losing his wit; and therefore he that can bear with one, should somewhat bear with the other; (though indeed voluntariness or involuntariness maketh a great difference). It is not worth a man's time, and labour, and cost, to be over-solicitous in his own vindication, let the world say of him what they please. "*Multum temporis ultio absumit; multis se injuriis objicit, dum unam dolet. Diutius irascimur omnes quam lædimur.*" Sen. de Ira. lib. 3. cap. 27." Revenge takes up a deal of time. He that complaineth of one injury, objects himself to many. We are all angry longer than we are hurt."

I have truly given you now the reasons, why I rather choose to speak these common necessary things, against the devil's party, the ungodly, the enemies, or neglecters of serious holiness (agreeable to the subject of his Majesty's Christian and excellent declaration against debauchery, at his entrance upon his royal government) than to meddle with any of the contending parties of these times (who are so angry because in obedience to authority I once endeavoured to reconcile them) or to be unseasonable in pleading any cause that is my own. And now referring the reader to this short discourse, I must first desire that he misunderstand me not in one or two passages. 1. That my citation of the passage in the Homilies, be not taken as if I spoke a word against it, though I say, I dare not myself subscribe it; for though I think myself, that seeing a persecutor like Saul may repent, and be pardoned, a mocker at godliness may repent and be forgiven also; yet I am resolved still to suspect my own understanding, rather than to speak against the doctrine of the church.

2. Think it not strange that I reprehend even ministers that are secret or open opposers of a holy diligence; for our

aforesaid Homily telleth us as followeth : Hom. for Information, &c. part 2. pp. 150, 151. " Examples of such scorers, we read in 2 Chron. when the good king Hezekiah, in the beginning of his reign had destroyed idolatry, purged the temple, and reformed religion in his realm, he sent messengers into every city to gather the people to Jerusalem to solemnize the feast of Easter in such sort as God had appointed ; the posts went from city to city.—And what did the people, think ye? Did they laud and praise the name of the Lord that had given them so good a king, so zealous a prince to abolish idolatry, and to restore again God's true religion? No, no, the Scripture saith, the people laughed them to scorn, and mocked the king's messengers. And in the last chapter of the same book it is written, that Almighty God having compassion on his people, sent his messengers the prophets to them, to call them from their abominable idolatry, and wicked kind of living : but they mocked his messengers, they despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, and till there was no remedy. The wicked people that were in the days of Noah made but a mock at the word of God, when Noah told them that God would take vengeance on them for their sins.—Lot preached to the Sodomites, that except they repented, both they and their city should be destroyed ; they thought his sayings impossible to be true ; they scorned and mocked his admonitions, and reputed him as an old doting fool. But God burnt up those scorers and mockers of his holy word. And what estimation had Christ's doctrine among the Scribes and Pharisees? what reward had he among them? The Pharisees which were covetous, did scorn him in his doctrine. O then ye see that worldly, rich men do scorn the doctrine of their salvation ; the worldly wise men do scorn the doctrine of Christ as foolishness to their understandings. These scorers have ever been, and ever shall be to the world's end. For St. Peter prophesied that such scorers should be in the end before the latter day. Take heed, therefore, my brethren, take heed ; be ye not scorers of God's most holy word : provoke him not to pour out his wrath upon you, as he did upon those gibbers and mockers : be not wilful murderers of your own souls." Thus far the Homily.



And no marvel if priests may be guilty as well as people, if it be true that is said by the church in Hom. 3. against Peril of Idolatry, pp. 56, 57. "But a true preacher to stay this mischief, is in very many places scarcely heard once in the whole year, and somewhere not once in seven years, as it is evident to be proved. Further, it appeareth not by any story of credit, that true and sincere preaching hath endured in any one place above a hundred years. But it is evident that images, superstition, and worshipping of images, and idolatry, have continued many hundred years——For preaching of God's word (most sincere in the beginning) by process of time waxed less and less pure, and after corrupt, and last of all altogether laid down and left off, and other inventions of men crept in place of it:——So that laity and clergy, learned and unlearned, all ages, sexes, and degrees of men, women and children of whole Christendom (a most horrible and dreadful thing to think), have been at once drowned in abominable idolatry, of all other vices most detested of God, and most damnable in man, and that by the space of eight hundred years." So far the Church of England.

And though I am far from crediting the many fabulous stories in that and such other books; yet I shall recite one instance in the Life of Philip Neri, the father of the Oratorians, which shall shew you, that even among the Papists, holy, serious diligence where it is, hath the same usage from the profane, both clergy and laity, as in other places, and so that every where holiness is persecuted by men professing the same religion with those they persecute.

The meetings of the Oratorians and their exercises, so like those now abhorred by many, are by Baronius (that was one of them) thus described, as you may see in the Life of Neri, p. 45.

"Certainly by the Divine wisdom was it brought to pass, that in our times——Assemblies were instituted in the city, much what after the form of those apostolical conventions; such especially as by the apostle were appointed for discoursing of divine matters, both for edifying the hearers, and for propagating the church.——It was agreed, that the zealous Christians should meet a-days at Saint Hierom's Oratory, and there a religious meeting should be held after this manner. First, silence being made, they began with prayer,

and one of the brothers reads some pious lesson. At the reading of which, the father used to interpose upon occasion, explaining more fully, enlarging and vehemently inculcating on the minds of the auditors the things read, continuing his discourse sometime a whole hour (to the great satisfaction of the hearers) dialogue-wise, asking some of the company their opinions of such a thing. Afterward, by his appointment, one of them went up into the desk, raised upon steps, and made an oration, without flourishes or varnish of language, composed out of the approved and choice lives of saints, sacred writ, and sentences of holy fathers. He that succeeded him, discoursed after the same manner, but on a differing matter. Then followed the third, who related some part of the church story in the order of its several ages. Every one of these had his half-hour allotted him, and performed all with marvellous delight and approbation; then singing some hymn, and going to prayers again, the company broke up. All things thus ordered, and ratified by the pope as far as the times would suffer, the beautiful face of the primitive apostolical assembling, seemed to be revived again; whereat all good men rejoicing, and many taking their model from them, the like exercises of piety were set up and practised in other places." So far Baronius.

If any say that this long and zealous exercise was not in private houses; I answer, allow us an oratory, as the pope himself allowed them, and we had rather far be there than in private houses: but if any that hinder such from being public, shall then reproach it for being in a less public place, they scarce play fair. The church of England, in the third part of the sermon against Peril of Idolatry, pp. 66, 67. saith, In Maximinian and Constantius the emperor's proclamation, the places where Christians resorted to public prayer, were called conventicles. See further.

But how were the Oratorians esteemed and used? In Chap. xvi. of Nerius's Persecutions, after the mention of men's rancour and railing that maligned him, it follows, p. 56. "that the prelate that was deputy of the city, moved by the reports of them that bore a spleen to Philip, sent for him, and reprehended him sharply: 'Is it not a shame (saith he) that you who profess a contempt of the world, should

hunt for popular applause, and walk through the city guarded with troops, with such nets as these, fishing for church-preferments?' When having shrewdly taunted him with such like expressions, he prohibits him the hearing of confessions for fifteen days, and to use the customs of the Oratory, but by leave first obtained, or to lead about with him any companies of men, threatening imprisonment upon his disobedience: neither would he let him depart till he put in security for his appearance, saying, 'Come, you do all this not for the glory of God, but to make a party for yourself. Meantime, while the good man was commending himself to God, having entreated divers religious persons to be instant in prayer about this business, one appeareth, and saith, 'This trouble shall be quickly over, and the work that is begun be more strongly confirmed; they who resist now, shall assist hereafter; and if any one shall dare to oppose it any longer, God shall speedily avenge it on him: The prelate, that is your chiefest adversary, shall certainly die within fifteen days.' And it fell out precisely as he foretold; for the prelate (the Pope's deputy) relating the proceedings to his Holiness somewhat partially, died suddenly. No sooner was this blaze of persecutions out, but a much fiercer was kindled against the order: for under pretext of piety and religion, some possessed the Pope that the preachers of St. Hieroms, many times delivered things ridiculous, and unsound, which argued high indiscretion, or ignorance, and must needs endanger their hearers."——

I would not have troubled you with any of these citations, but, to let those know that are offended at my reproof of impious Ministers, that in all places and parties in the world, where there is any serious diligence for salvation, there are always enemies of the same profession even among the Clergy as well as others. The hindering of holy diligence and seriousness, is the work of the devil and his instruments in the world. The promoting it is the work of Christ, and of his servants. The great actions of the world are but the conflicting of these two armies, the salvation of the conquerors, and the damnation of the conquered being the end. By this contending for faith and holiness, and bearing the cross, I take myself bound to perform my covenant of 'professing



the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully fighting under his banner, against the devil, the world, and the flesh, to my lives' end.' Reader, thou art engaged to the like as well as I, and shalt be judged accordingly, and reap as thou hast sowed. **CHOOSE** and **DO** as thou wilt **SPEED**.

# NOW OR NEVER.

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ECCLESIASTES ix. 10.

*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might ; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest.*

THE mortality of man being the principal subject of Solomon in this chapter, and observing that wisdom and piety exempt not men from death, he first hence infers, that God's love or hatred to one man above another, is not to be gathered by his dealing with them here, where "all things" in the common course of providence "do come alike to all." The common sin hath introduced death as a common punishment, which levelleth all, and endeth all the contrivances, businesses, and enjoyments of this life, to good and bad ; and the discriminating justice is not ordinarily manifested here. An epicure or infidel would think Solomon were here pleading their unmanly, impious cause ; but it is not the cessation of the life, or operations, or enjoyments of the soul that he is speaking of, as if there were no life to come, or the soul of man were not immortal ; but it is the cessation of all the actions, and honours, and pleasures of this life, which to good or bad shall be no more. Here they have no more reward, the memory of them will be here forgotten. "They have no more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun <sup>a</sup>."

From hence he further inferreth, that the comforts of life are but short and transitory, and, therefore, that what the creature can afford, must be presently taken : and as the wicked shall have no more but present pleasures, so the faithful may take their lawful comforts in the present mode-

<sup>a</sup> Eccles. ix. 5, 6.

rate use of creatures ; for if their delightful goodness be of right and use to any, it is to them : and therefore, though they may not use them to their hurt, to the pampering of their flesh, and strengthening their lusts, and hindering spiritual duties, benefits, and salvation, yet must they “serve the Lord with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things,” which he giveth them <sup>b</sup>.

Next, he inferreth from the brevity of man’s life, the necessity of speed, and diligence in his duty. And this is in the words of my text : where you have, I. The Duty commanded. II. The Reason or Motive to enforce it.

The Duty is in the first part, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do,” that is, whatever work is assigned thee by God to do in this transitory life, “do it with thy might ;” that is, 1. Speedily, without delay. 2. Diligently, and as well as thou art able, and not with slothfulness, or by the halves.

The Motive is in the latter part ; “For there is no work nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest ;” that is, it must be *now* or *never* : the grave, where thy work cannot be done, will quickly end thy opportunities. The Chaldee paraphrase appropriates the sense too narrowly to works of charity, or alms ; ‘whatsoever good and alms-giving thou findest to do :’ and the moving reason they read accordingly, ‘for nothing but thy works of righteousness and mercy follow thee.’ But the words are more general, and the sense is obvious, contained in these two propositions.

*Doct. I.* The work of this life cannot be done, when this life is ended. Or, There is no working in the grave, to which we are all making haste.

*Doct. II.* Therefore while we have time, we must do our best. Or, Do the work of this present life with vigour and diligence.

It is from an unquestionable and commonly acknowledged truth, that Solomon here urgeth us to diligence in duty ; and therefore to prove it would be but loss of time. As there are two worlds for man to live in, and so two lives for man to live, so each of these lives hath its peculiar employment. This is the life of preparation ; the next is the life of

<sup>b</sup> Deut. xxviii. 47.



our reward or punishment : we are now but in the womb of eternity, and must live hereafter in the open world. We are now but set to school to learn the work that we must do for ever. This is the time of our apprenticeship ; we are learning the trade that we must live upon in heaven. We run now, that we may then receive the crown ; we fight now, that we may then triumph in victory. The grave hath no work, but heaven hath work ; and hell hath suffering : there is no repentance unto life hereafter ; but there is repentance unto torment, and to desperation. There is no believing of a happiness unseen in order to the obtaining of it ; or of a misery unseen in order to the escaping of it ; nor believing in a Saviour in order to these ends : but there is the fruition of the happiness which was here believed ; and feeling of the misery that men would not believe ; and suffering from him as a righteous Judge, whom they rejected as a merciful Saviour. So that it is not all work that ceaseth at our death ; but only the work of this present life.

And indeed no reason can shew us the least probability of doing our work when our time is done, that was given us to do it in. If it can be done, it must be, 1. By the recalling of our time. 2. By the return of life. 3. Or, by opportunity in another life : but there is no hope of any of these.

1. Who knoweth not that time cannot be recalled ? That which once was will be no more. Yesterday will never come again. To-day is passing, and will not return. You may work while it is day ; but when you have lost that day, it will not return for you to work in. While your candle burneth, you may make use of its light, but when it is done, it is too late to use it. No force of medicine, no orator's elegant persuasions, no worldling's wealth, no prince's power, can call back one day or hour of time. If they could, what endeavours would there be used, when extremity hath taught them to value what they now despise ? What chafings would there be at last, if time could be purchased for any thing that man can give ! Then misers would bring out their wealth and say, ' All this will I give for one day's time of repentance more.' And lords and knights would lay down their honours, and say, ' Take all, and let us be the basest beggars, if we may but have one year of the time that we misspent.' Then kings would lay down their crowns

and say, 'Let us be equal with the lowest subjects, so we may but have the time again that we wasted in the cares and pleasures of the world.' Kingdoms would then seem a contemptible price for the recovery of time. The time that is now idled and talked away; the time that is now feasted and complimented away; that is unnecessarily sported and slept away; that is wickedly and presumptuously sinned away; how precious will it one day seem to all! How happy a bargain would they think that they had made, if at the dearest rates they could redeem it! The profanest mariner falls a praying, when he fears his time is at an end. If importunity would then prevail, how earnestly would they pray for the recovery of time, that formerly derided praying, or minded it not, or could not have while, or mocked God with lip-service, and customary forms, and feigned words instead of praying! What a liturgy would death teach the trifling, time-despising gallants, the idle, busy, dreaming-active, ambitious, covetous lovers of this world, if time could be entreated to return! How passionately then would they roar out their requests! 'O that we might once see the days of hope, and means, and mercy, which once we saw, and would not see! O that we had those days to spend in penitential tears and prayers, and holy preparations for an endless life, which we spent at cards, in needless recreations, in idle talk, in humouring others, on the pleasing of our flesh, or in the inordinate cares and businesses of the world! O that our youthful vigour might return! that our years might be renewed! that the days we spent in vanity might be recalled! that ministers might again be sent to us publicly and privately, with the message of grace that we once made light of! that the sun would once more shine upon us! and patience and mercy would once more reassume their work!' If cries or tears, or price or pains, would bring back lost, abused time, how happy were the now distracted, dreaming, dead-hearted, and impenitent world! If it would then serve their turn to say to the vigilant believers, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out," or to cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us," when the door is shut, the foolish would be saved as well as the wise<sup>c</sup>. But "this is the day of salvation! this is the accepted time<sup>d</sup>." "While it is called to-day, hear-

<sup>c</sup> Matt. xxv. 8, 10, 11.

<sup>d</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 2.

ken, and harden not your hearts <sup>e</sup>.” Awake thou that sleepest, and stand up from thy slothful, wilful death, and use the light that is afforded thee by Christ <sup>f</sup>, or else the everlasting, utter darkness, will shortly end thy time and hope.

2. And as time can never be recalled, so life shall never be here restored. “If a man die, shall he live (here) again? All the days of our appointed time we must therefore wait (in faith and diligence) till our change shall come <sup>g</sup>.” One life is appointed us on earth to dispatch the work that our everlasting life dependeth on; and we shall have but one. Lose that, and all is lost for ever. Yet you may hear, and read, and learn, and pray; but when this life is ended, it shall be so no more. You shall rise from the dead indeed to judgment, and to the life that now you are preparing for; but never to such a life as this on earth: your life is as the fighting of a battle, that must be won or lost at once. There is no coming hither again to mend what is done amiss. Oversights must be presently corrected by repentance, or else they are everlastingly past remedy. Now if you be not truly converted, you may be: if you find that you are carnal and miserable, you may be healed: if you are unpardoned, you may be pardoned: if you are enemies, you may be reconciled to God: but when once the thread of life is cut, your opportunities are at an end. Now you may inquire of your friends and teachers, what a poor soul must do that he must be saved, and you may receive particular instructions and exhortations, and God may bless them to the illuminating, renewing, and saving of your souls; but when life is past, it will be so no more. O then, if desperate souls might but return, and once more be tried with the means of life, what joyful tidings would it be! How welcome would the messenger be that bringeth it! Had hell but such an offer as this, and would any cries procure it from their righteous Judge, O what a change would be among them! How importunately would they cry to God, ‘O send us once again unto the earth!’ Once more let us see the face of mercy, and hear the tenders of Christ and of salvation! Once more let the ministers offer us their helps, and teach in season and out of season, in public and in private, and we will refuse

<sup>e</sup> Psal. xc. 8.

<sup>f</sup> Ephes. v. 14.

<sup>g</sup> Job xiv. 14.



their help and exhortations no more ; we will hate them and drive them away from our houses and towns no more. Once more let us have thy word and ordinances, and try whether we will not believe them, and use them better than we did. Once more let us have the help and company of thy saints, and we will scorn them, and abuse them, and persecute them no more. O for the great, invaluable mercy of such a life as once we had ! O try us once more with such a life, and see whether we will not condemn the world, and close with Christ, and live as strictly, and pray as earnestly, as those that we hated and abused for so doing ! O that we might once more be admitted into the holy assemblies, and have the Lord's days to spend in the business of our salvation ! We would plead no more against the power and purity of the ordinances : we would no more call that day a burden, nor hate them that spent it in works of holiness, nor plead for the liberty of the flesh therein.'

It makes my heart even shake within me, to think with what cries those damned souls would strive with God, and how they would roar out, ' O try us once again,' if they had but the least encouragement of hope ! But it will not be ; it must not be ! They had their day, and would not know it. They cannot lose their time and have it. They had faithful guides, and would not follow them : teachers they had, but would not learn. The dust of their feet must witness against them, because their entertained obeyed message cannot witness for them. Long did Christ wait with the patient tenders of his blood and Spirit : his grace was long and earnestly offered them, but could not be regarded and received. And they cannot finally refuse a Christ, and yet have a Christ ; or refuse his mercy, and yet be saved by it. He that would have Lazarus sent from the dead to warn his unbelieving brethren on earth, no doubt would have strongly purposed himself on a reformation, if he might once more have been tried. And how earnestly would he have begged for such a trial, that begged so hard for a drop of water ! But, alas ! such mouths must be stopped for ever with a " Remember, that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things<sup>h</sup>."

So that " it is appointed for all men once to die, and af-

<sup>h</sup> Luke xvi. 24, 25, 27, 28.

ter that the judgment<sup>i</sup>." But there is no return to earth again. The places of your abode, employment, and delight shall know you no more. You must see these faces of your friends, and converse in flesh with men, no more! - This world, these houses, this wealth and honour, as to any fruition, must be to you as if you had never known them. You must assemble here but a little while! yet a little longer, and we must preach, and you must hear it no more for ever. That, therefore, which you will do, must presently be done, or it will be too late. If ever you will repent and believe, it must be *now*. If ever you will be converted and sanctified, it must be *now*. If ever you will be pardoned, and reconciled to God, it must be *now*. If ever you will reign, it is now that you must fight and conquer. O that you were wise, that you understood this, and that you would consider your latter end<sup>k</sup>. And that you would let those words sink down into your hearts, which came from the heart of the Redeemer, as was witnessed by his tears: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace. But now they are hidden from thine eyes<sup>l</sup>." And that these warnings may not be the less regarded, because you have so often heard them, when often hearing increaseth your obligation, and diminisheth not the truth, or your danger.

3. And as there is no return to earth, so there is no doing this work hereafter. Heaven and hell are for other work. If the infant be dead-born, the open world will not revive him. That which is generated, and born a beast or serpent, will not, by all the influences of the heavens, or all the powers of sun or earth, become a man. The second and third concoction presuppose the first; the harvest doth presuppose the seed-time, and the labour of the husbandman. It is now that you must sow, and hereafter that you must reap. It is now that you must work, and then that you must receive your wages. Is this believed and considered by the sleepy world? Alas, sirs, do you live as men that must live here no more? Do you work as men that must work no more, and pray as men that must pray no more, when once the time of work is ended? What thinkest thou, poor besotted sinner! will God command the sun to stand

<sup>i</sup> Heb. xix. 27.<sup>k</sup> Deut. xxxii. 29.<sup>l</sup> Luke xix. 41, 42.

still while thou rebellest or forgettest thy work and him? Dost thou look he should pervert the course of nature, and continue the spring and seed-time till thou hast a mind to sow? or that he will return the dead-born, or mishapen infant into the womb, that it may be better formed or quickened? Will he renew thy age and make thee young again, and call back the hours that thou prodigally wastedst on thy lusts and idleness? Canst thou look for this at the hand of God, when nature and Scripture assure thee of the contrary? If not, why hast thou not yet done with thy beloved sins? Why hast thou not yet begun to live? Why sittest thou still, while thy soul is unrenewed, and all thy preparation for death and judgment is yet to make? How fain would satan find thee thus at death. How fain would he have leave to blow out thy candle, before thou hast entered into the way of life. Dost thou look to have preachers sent after thee, to bring thee the mercy which thy contempt here left behind? Wilt thou hear and be converted in the grave and hell? or wilt thou be saved without holiness? that is, in the despite of God, that hath resolved, it shall not be? O ye sons of sleep, of death, of darkness, awake and live, and hear the Lord, before the grave and hell have shut their mouths upon you! Hear now, lest hearing be too late! Hear now if you will ever hear! Hear now if you have ears to hear! And O ye sons of light, that see what sleeping sinners see not, call to them, and ring them such a peal of lamentations, tears, and compassionate entreaties, as is suited to such a dead and doleful state; who knows but God may bless it to awake them?

If any of you be so far awakened, as to ask me, what I am calling you to do, my text tells you in general, Up and be doing. Look about you, and see what you have to do, and do it with your might.

1. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do;" that is, whatsoever is a duty imposed by the Lord, whatsoever is a means conducing to thy own or other's welfare; whatsoever necessity calleth thee to do, and opportunity alloweth thee to do.

"Thy hand findeth;" that is, thy executive power by the conduct of thy understanding is now to do.

"Do it with thy might." Do thy best in it. 1. Trifle



not, but do it presently, without unnecessary delay. 2. Do it resolutely. Remain not doubtful, unresolved, in suspense as if it were yet a question with thee whether thou shouldst do it or not.

3. Do it with thy most awakened affections, and serious intention of the powers of thy soul. Sleepiness and insensibility are most unsuitable to such works. It is a peculiar people, zealous of good works that Christ hath purchased to himself<sup>m</sup>.

4. Do it with all necessary forecast and contrivance. Not with a distracting, hindering care; but with such a care as may shew that you despise not your master, and are not regardless of his work. And with such a care as is suited to the difficulties and nature of the thing, and is necessary to the due accomplishment.

5. Do it not slothfully, but vigorously, and with diligence. Stick not at thy labour, lest thou hear, "Thou wicked and slothful servant<sup>n</sup>." "Hide not thy hand in thy bosom with the slothful," and say not, "There is a lion in the way<sup>o</sup>." The negligent and the vicious, the waster and the slothful, differ but as one brother from another<sup>p</sup>. As the self-murder of the wilfully ungodly, so also "the desire of the slothful killeth him, because his hands refuse to labour<sup>q</sup>." "The soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat<sup>r</sup>." "Be thou not slothful in business, but be fervent in Spirit serving the Lord<sup>s</sup>."

6. Do it with constancy, and not with destructive pauses and intermissions, or with weariness and turning back. "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that is of clean hands shall be stronger and stronger<sup>t</sup>." "Be steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord<sup>u</sup>." "Be not weary of well doing; for in due season we shall reap if we faint not<sup>x</sup>." These six particulars are necessary, if you will observe the precept in my text.

But that misunderstanding hinder not the performance,

<sup>m</sup> Tit. ii. 14.

<sup>n</sup> Matt. xxv. 26.

<sup>o</sup> Prov. xxvi. 13, 14.

<sup>p</sup> Prov. xviii. 9.

<sup>q</sup> Prov. xvi. 25.

<sup>r</sup> Prov. xiii. 4.

<sup>s</sup> Rom. xii. 11.

<sup>t</sup> Job xvii. 9.

<sup>u</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 58.

<sup>x</sup> Gal. vi. 9.

I shall acquaint you further with the sense, by these few explicatory cautions.

1. The Might and Diligence here required, excludeth not the necessity of deliberation and prudent conduct. Otherwise, the faster you go, the further you may go out of the way; and misguided zeal may spoil all the work, and make it but an injury to others or yourselves. A little imprudence in the season, and order, and manner of a duty, sometimes may spoil it, and hinder the success, and make it to do more hurt than good. How many a sermon, or prayer, or reproof is made the matter of derision and contempt, for some imprudent passages or deportment? God sendeth not his servants to be jesters of the world, or to play the madmen as David in his fears: we must be wise and innocent, as well as resolute and valiant. Though fleshly and worldly wisdom be not desirable, as being but foolishness with God, yet the "wisdom which is from above, and is first pure, and then peaceable," and is acquainted with the high and hidden mysteries, and is "justified of her children," must be the guide of all our holy actions. Holiness is not blind. Illumination is the first part of sanctification. Believers are children of the light. Nothing requireth so much wisdom as the matters of God, and of our salvation. Folly is most unsuitable to such excellent employments, and most unbecoming the sons of the Most High. It is a spirit of wisdom that animateth all the saints<sup>y</sup>. It is the treasures of wisdom that dwelleth in Christ, and are communicated to his members.<sup>z</sup> We must "walk in wisdom toward them that are without<sup>a</sup>." And our "work must be shewn out of a good conversation, with meekness of wisdom<sup>b</sup>." Yet I must needs say, that it is more in great things than in small, in the substance than the circumstances; in a sound judgment and estimate of things, and suitable choice and prosecution, than in fine expressions or deportment, answering proud men's expectations.

2. Though you must work with your might, yet with a diversity agreeable to the quality of your several works. Some works must be preferred before others. All cannot be done at once. That is a sin out of season, which in sea-

<sup>y</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 19. ii 6, 7. Eph. i. 8. 17. Col. iii. 16.      <sup>z</sup> Col. ii. 3.

<sup>a</sup> Col. iv. 5.

<sup>b</sup> Jam. iii. 13.

son is a duty. The greatest and the most urgent work must be preferred. And some works must be done with double fervour and resolution, and some with less. Buying, and selling, and marrying, and possessing, and using the world, must be done with a fear of overdoing, and in a sort as if we did them not, though they also must have a necessary diligence<sup>b</sup>. God's kingdom and its righteousness must be first sought<sup>c</sup>. And our labour for the meat that perisheth, must be comparatively as none<sup>d</sup>.

3. Lastly, it is not an irregular, nor a self-disturbing, vexatious violence that is required of us; but a sweet, well-settled resolution, and a delightful, expeditious diligence, that makes the wheels go merrily on, and the more easily get over those rubs and difficulties, that clog and stop a slothful soul.

And now will you lend me the assistance of your consciences, for the transcribing of this command of God upon your hearts, and taking out a copy of this order, for the regulating of your lives? 'Whatsoever,' is not a word so comprehensive as to include any vanity or sin; but so comprehensive as to include all your duty.

1. To begin with the lowest: the very works of your bodily callings must have diligence. "In the sweat of your brows you must eat your bread<sup>e</sup>." "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do<sup>f</sup>." "He that will not work, let him not eat<sup>g</sup>." "Disorderly walkers, busybodies, that will not work with quietness, and eat their own bread, are to be avoided and shamed by the church<sup>h</sup>." Lazy servants are unfaithful to men, and disobedient to God, who commandeth them to "obey their masters according to the flesh" (unbelieving, ungodly masters) "in all things," (that concerns their service) "and that not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, and in the fear of God, doing whatsoever they do as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord" (even for this) "they shall receive the reward of the inheritance<sup>i</sup>." "But he that doth wrong" (by slothfulness, or unfaithfulness) shall receive for the wrong which he hath done<sup>k</sup>."

<sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 29—31.

<sup>c</sup> Gen. iii. 19.

<sup>h</sup> 2 Thess. iii. 6. 11, 12. 14.

<sup>e</sup> Matt. vi. 33.

<sup>f</sup> Exod. xx. 9.

<sup>i</sup> Col. iii. 22—24.

<sup>d</sup> John vi. 27.

<sup>g</sup> 2 Thess. iii. 10.

<sup>k</sup> Verse 25.



Success is God's ordinary temporal reward of diligence<sup>1</sup>. And diseases, poverty, shame, disappointment, or self-tormenting melancholy, are his usual punishments of sloth. Hard labour redeemeth time: you will have the more to lay out in greater works. The slothful is still behindhand, and therefore must leave much of his work undone.

2. Are you Parents, or Governors of Families? You have work to do for God, and for your children's and servants' souls. Do it with your might. Deal wisely, but seriously and frequently with them about their sins, their duty, and their hopes of heaven. Tell them whither they are going, and which way they must go. Make them understand they have a higher Father and Master that must be first served, and greater work than yours. Waken them from their natural insensibility and sloth. Turn not all your family duties into lifeless, customary forms, (whether extemporated, or by rote); speak about God, and heaven, and hell, and holiness with that seriousness as beseems men that believe what they say, and would have those they speak to, to believe it. Talk not either drowsily or lightly, or jestingly, of such dreadful, or joyful, unexpressible things. Remember, that your families and you, are going to the grave, and to the world where there is no more room for your exhortations. There is no catechising, examining, or serious instructing them in the grave, whither they and you are going. It must be *now* or *never*; and, therefore, do it with your might. The words of God must be "in your hearts, and you must diligently teach them to your children, talking of them when you sit in your houses, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up<sup>m</sup>."

3. Have you ignorant and ungodly neighbours, whose misery calls for your compassion, and relief? Speak to them and help them with prudent diligence. Lose not your opportunities. Stay not till death hath stopt your mouths, or stopt their ears. Stay not till they are out of hearing, and taken from your converse. Stay not till they are in hell before you warn them of it, or till heaven be lost, before you have seriously called to them to remember it. Go to their houses; take all opportunities; stoop to their infirmities; bear with unthankful frowardness; it is for men's salvation. Remember there is no place for your instructions or

<sup>1</sup> Prov. x. 4. xii. 24. 27.

<sup>m</sup> Deut. vi. 6—8. xi. 18—20.

exhortations in the grave or hell. Your dust cannot speak, and their dust cannot hear. Up, therefore, and be doing with all your might!

4. Hath God intrusted you with the Riches of the world; with many talents or with few, by which he looketh you should relieve the needy, and especially should promote those works of piety which are the greatest charity? Give (prudently, but willingly and liberally) while you have to give. It is your gain. The time of market for your souls, and of laying up a treasure in heaven, and setting your money to the most gainful usury; and of making you friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; and furthering your salvation, by that which hindereth other men's, and occasioneth their perdition. "As you have opportunity, do good to all men, but especially to them of the household of faith<sup>p</sup>." "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth." "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good<sup>o</sup>." "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thy hand to do it. Say not to thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give, when thou hast it by thee<sup>p</sup>." Lay up a foundation for the time to come. Do good before thy heart be hardened, thy riches blasted and consumed, thy opportunities taken away; part with it before it part with thee. Remember it must be *now* or *never*. There is no working in the grave.

5. Hath God intrusted you with Power, or Interest, by which you may promote his honour in the world, and relieve the oppressed, and restrain the rage of impious malice! Hath he made you Governors, and put the sword of justice into your hands? Up, then, and be doing with your might. Defend the innocent, protect the servants of the Lord, cherish them that do well, be a terror to the wicked, encourage the strictest obedience to the Universal Governor, discountenance the breakers of his laws. Look not to be revered or obeyed before him, or more carefully than he. Openly maintain his truth and worship without fear or shame. Deal

<sup>p</sup> Gal. vi. 6. 9. 12.<sup>o</sup> Eccles. xi. 1, 2. 6.<sup>p</sup> Prov. iii. 27, 28.

gently and tenderly with his lambs and little ones. Search after vice that you may successfully suppress it. Hate those temptations that would draw you to man-pleasing, temporizing, remissness, or countenancing sin; but especially those that would ensnare you in a controversy with heaven, and in quarrels against the ways of holiness, or in that self-confounding sin of abusing and opposing the people that are most careful to please the Lord. Your trust is great, and so is your advantage to do good. And how great will be your account, and how dreadful, if you be unfaithful. As you signify more than hundreds or thousands of the meaner sort, and your actions do most good or hurt, so you must expect to be accordingly dealt with, when you come to the impartial, final judgment. Befriend the Gospel as the charter of your everlasting privileges; own those that Christ hath told you he will own. Use them as men that are ready to hear. "Insomuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it unto me<sup>q</sup>." "Know not a wicked person;" but let "your eyes be on the faithful of the land, that they may dwell therein, and lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty<sup>r</sup>." "Let those that work the work of the Lord, be with you without fear<sup>s</sup>." Remember that it is the character of a Pharisee and hypocrite, to see the mote of the non-observance of a ceremony, or tradition, or smaller matter of difference in religion in their brother's eye, and not to see the beam of hypocrisy, injustice, and malicious, cruel opposition of Christ and his disciples in their own. And that it is the brand of them that please not God, that are filling up their sins, on whom God's wrath is coming to the utmost, to "persecute the servants of the Lord, forbidding them to preach to the people that they might be saved<sup>t</sup>."

Learn well the second and the hundred and first Psalm. And write these sentences on your walls and doors, as an antidote against that self-undoing sin. "Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a milstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea<sup>u</sup>." "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye<sup>x</sup>." "Him

<sup>q</sup> Matt. xxv.<sup>r</sup> Psal. ci. 1.<sup>s</sup> 1 Cor. xvi. 10.<sup>t</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 15, 6.<sup>u</sup> Matt. xviii. 16.<sup>x</sup> Zech. ii. 8.



that is weak in the faith, receive you; but not to doubtful disputations. For God hath received him<sup>y</sup>." "He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoso shall give to drink to one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily, I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward<sup>z</sup>." If you love not the godly, love yourselves (so far as to such self-love is possible), wound not your own hearts, to make their fingers bleed. Damn not your own souls, (and that by the surest, nearest way) that you may hurt their bodies. Provoke not God to thrust you from his presence, and deny your suits, by your dealing so with them. Stop not your own mouths, when your misery will bespeak your loudest cries for mercy, by your stopping the mouths of the servants of the Lord, and refusing to hear their requests for justice. If you have the serpent's enmity against the woman's seed, you must expect the serpent's doom. Your heads will be bruised, when you have bruised their heels<sup>a</sup>." "Kick not against the pricks<sup>b</sup>." Let not "briars and thorns set themselves in battle against the Lord, lest he go, therefore, through them, and burn them together<sup>c</sup>."

I speak not any of this by way of accusation or dishonourable reflection on the Magistrate. Blessed be God that hath given us the comfort of your defence. But knowing what the tempter aimeth at, and where it is that your danger lieth, and by what means the rulers of the earth have been undone, faithfulness commandeth me to tell you of the snare, and to set before you good and evil, as ever I would escape the guilt of betraying you by flattery, or cruel and cowardly silence.

And especially when your Magistracy is but annual, or for a short time, it concerneth you to be doing with your might. It is but this year, or short space of time that you have to do this special service in; lose this, and lose all. By what men on earth should God be eminently served and honoured, if not by Magistrates, whom he hath eminently advanced, impowered, and intrusted? With considerate

<sup>y</sup> Rom. xiv. 1, 2. xv. 1.

<sup>z</sup> Matt. x. 40—42.

<sup>a</sup> Gen. iii. 15.

<sup>b</sup> Acts ix. 5.

<sup>c</sup> Isa. xlvii. 4.

foresight, seriously ask yourselves the question, Are you willing to hear, at the day of your accounts, that you had but one year, or a few, to do God special service in, and that you knew this, and yet would not do it? Can your hearts bear it then, to hear and think, that you lost, and wilfully lost such an opportunity? Look about you then, and see what is to be done. Are there not alehouses to be suppressed, and drunkards, and riotous persons to be restrained? Preaching and piety to be promoted? Do it with your might. For it must be *now or never*.

6. To come yet a little nearer you, and speak of the work that is yet to be done in our own souls. Are any of you yet in the state of unrenewed nature, born only of the flesh, and not of the Spirit<sup>d</sup>. “Minding the things of the flesh, and not the things of the Spirit<sup>e</sup>,” and consequently yet in the “power of satan, taken captive by him, at his will<sup>f</sup>.” Up and be doing, if thou love thy soul. If thou care whether thou be in joy or misery for ever, bewail thy sin and spiritual distress. Make out to Christ, cry mightily to him for his renewing and reconciling, pardoning grace. Plead his satisfaction, his merits, and his promises. Away with thy rebellion, and thy beloved sin; deliver up thy soul entirely to Christ, to be sanctified, governed, and saved by him. Make no more demurs about it; it is not a matter to be questioned, or trifled in. Let the earth be acquainted with thy bended knees, and the air with thy complaints and cries, and men with thy confessions and inquiries after the way of life; and heaven with thy sorrows, desires, and resolutions, till thy soul be acquainted with the Spirit of Christ<sup>g</sup>, and with the new, the holy, and heavenly nature; and thy heart have received the transcript of God’s law, the impress of the Gospel, and so the image of thy Creator and Redeemer. Ply this work with all thy might. For there is no conversion, renovation, or repentance unto life in the grave, whither thou goest. It must be *now or never*. And never saved, if never sanctified<sup>h</sup>.

7. Hast thou any prevailing sin to mortify, that either reigneth in thee, or woundeth thee and keepeth thy soul in darkness and unacquaintedness with God? Assault it re-

<sup>d</sup> John iii. 3, 5, 6.    <sup>e</sup> Rom. viii. 1. 5. 7. 9. 13.    <sup>f</sup> Acts xxvi. 18.    <sup>g</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 26.

<sup>h</sup> Rom. viii. 9.

<sup>i</sup> Heb. xii. 14.

solutely ; reject it speedily ; abhor the motions of it ; turn away from the persons or things that would entice thee. Hate the doors of the harlot, and of the alehouse, or the gaming-house ; and go not as the “ox to the slaughter, and as a bird to the fowler’s snare, and as a fool to the correction of the stocks, as if thou knewest not that it is for thy life<sup>l</sup>.” Why, thou befooled, stupid soul ! wilt thou be tasting of the poisoned cup ? wilt thou be sporting thee with the bait ? Hast thou no where to walk and play thee, but at the brink of hell ? “Must not the flesh be crucified with its affections and lusts<sup>k</sup>.” Must it not be tamed and mortified, or thy soul condemned<sup>l</sup> ? “Run not, therefore, as at uncertainty : fight not as one that beats the air<sup>m</sup>,” seeing this must be done, or thou art undone, delay and dally with sin no longer. Let this be the day ; resolve, and resist it with thy might. It must be *now* or *never*. When death comes, it is too late. It will be then no reward to leave thy sin, which thou canst keep no longer. No part of holiness or happiness that thou art not drunk, or proud, or lustful in the grave or hell. As thou art wise, therefore, know and take thy time.

8. Art thou in a declined, lapsed state ? decayed in grace ? Hast thou lost thy first desires and love ? Do thy first works, and do them with thy might. Delay not, but remember from whence thou art fallen, and what thou hast lost by it, and into how sad a case thy folly and negligence hath brought thee ; say, “I will go and return to my first husband ; for then was it better with me than now<sup>n</sup>.” Cry out with Job, “O that I were as in months past ! as in the days when God preserved me ! when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness. As I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was on my tabernacle, when the Almighty was yet with me<sup>o</sup>.” Return while thou hast day, lest the night surprise thee : loiter and delay no more ; thou hast lost by it already : thou art far behindhand. Bestir thee therefore with all thy might.

9. Art thou in the darkness of uncertainty concerning thy conversion, and thy everlasting state ? Dost thou not know whether thou be in a state of life or death ? and what

<sup>l</sup> Prov. vii. 22, 23.<sup>k</sup> Gal. v. 24.<sup>l</sup> Rom. viii. 13. 1 Cor. ix. 27.<sup>m</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 26.<sup>n</sup> Hos. ii. 7.<sup>o</sup> Job xxix. 2—5.



should become of thee, if this were the day or hour of thy change? If thou art careful about it, and inquirest, and usest the means that God hath appointed thee for assurance, I have then no more to say to thee now, but wait on God, and thou shalt not be disappointed or ashamed! Thou shalt have assurance in due time, or be saved before thou wouldst believe thou shouldst be saved. Be patient and obedient, and the light of Christ will shine upon thee, and yet thou shalt see the days of peace. But if thou art careless in thy uncertainty, and mindest not so great a business, be awakened, and call thy soul to its account; search and examine thy heart and life: read, and consider, and take advice of faithful guides. Canst thou carelessly sleep, and laugh, and sport, and follow thy lesser business as if thy salvation were made sure, when thou knowest not where thou must dwell for ever? "Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith? prove yourselves; know ye not your own selves, that Christ is in you except you are reprobates<sup>p</sup>." "Give all diligence (in time) to make your calling and election sure<sup>q</sup>." In the grave and hell there is no making sure of heaven: you are then past inquiries and self-examinations, in order to any recovery or hope. Another kind of trial will finally resolve you. Up therefore and diligently ply the work; it must be *now or never*.

10. In all the duties of thy profession, of piety, justice, or charity, to God, thyself, or others, up and be doing with thy might. Art thou seeking to inflame thy soul with love to God? plunge thyself in the ocean of his love; admire his mercies; gaze upon the representations of his transcendent goodness; O taste and see that the Lord is gracious! Remember that he must be loved with all thy heart, and soul, and might; canst thou pour out thy love upon a creature, and give but a few barren drops to God?

When thou art fearing him, let his fear command thy soul, and conquer all the fear of man.

When thou art trusting him, do it without distrust, and cast all thy care and thyself upon him: trust him as a creature should trust his God, and the members of Christ should trust their Head and dear Redeemer.

When thou art making mention of his great and dreadful

<sup>p</sup> 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

<sup>q</sup> 2 Pet. i. 10.

name, O do it with reverence, and awe, and admiration ; and take not the name of God in vain.

When thou art reading his word, let the majesty of the author, and the greatness of the matter, and gravity of the style, possess thee with an obediential fear. Love it, and let it be sweeter to thee than the honeycomb, and more precious than thousands of gold and silver. Resolve to do what there thou findest to be the will of God. When thou art praying in secret, or in the family, do it with thy might ; cry mightily to God as a soul under sin, and wants, and danger, that is stepping into an endless life, should do. Let the reverence and the fervour of thy prayers shew that it is God himself that thou art speaking to ; that it is heaven itself that thou art praying for ; hell itself that thou art praying to be saved from. Wilt thou be dull and senseless on such an errand to the living God ? Remember what lieth upon thy failing or prevailing, and that it must be *now* or *never*.

Art thou a Preacher of the Gospel, and takest charge of the souls of men ? “Take heed to thyself and to the whole flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made thee an overseer, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood<sup>r</sup>.” Let not the blood of souls, and the blood that purchased them, be required at thy hands. “Thou art charged before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom, that thou preach the word, be instant in season and out of season ; reprove, rebuke and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine<sup>s</sup>.” “Teach every man, and exhort every man<sup>t</sup>.” “Even night and day with tears<sup>u</sup>.” “Save men with fear, pulling them out of the fire<sup>x</sup>.” “Cry aloud ; lift up thy voice like a trumpet ; tell them of their transgressions<sup>y</sup>.” Yet thou art alive, and they are alive ; yet thou hast a tongue, and they have ears : the final sentence hath not yet cut off their hopes. Preach therefore, and preach with all thy might. Exhort them privately and personally with all the seriousness thou canst. Quickly, or it will be too late. Prudently, or satan will overreach thee ; fervently, or thy words are like to be disregarded. Remember when thou lookest them in the faces, when thou beholdest the

<sup>r</sup> Acts xx. 28. Ezek. iii. 18. 20.

<sup>s</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2.

<sup>t</sup> Col. i. 28.

<sup>u</sup> Acts xx. 31.

<sup>x</sup> Jude 23.

<sup>y</sup> Isa. lviii. 1.

assemblies, that they must be converted or condemned, sanctified on earth, or tormented in hell; and that this is the day: it must be *now* or *never*.

In a word: apply this quickening precept to all the duties of the Christian course. Be religious, and just, and charitable in good earnest, if you would be taken for such when you look for the reward. "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling<sup>z</sup>." "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many shall seek to enter and shall not be able<sup>a</sup>." "Many run, but few receive the prize: so run that you may obtain<sup>b</sup>." "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly, and the sinner appear<sup>c</sup>?" Let the doating world deride your diligence, and set themselves to hinder and afflict you: it will be but a little while before experience change their minds, and make them sing another song. Follow Christ fully: ply your work and lose no time. The Judge is coming. Let not words or any thing that man can do, prevail with you to sit down, or stop you in a journey of such importance. Please God, though flesh, and friends, and all the world should be displeased. Whatever come of your reputation, or estates, or liberties, or lives, be sure you look to life eternal; and cast not that on any hazard, for a withering flower, or a pleasant dream, or a picture of commodity, or any vanity that the deceiver can present. "For what shall it profit you to win the whole world and lose your soul<sup>d</sup>?" Or to have been honoured and obeyed on earth, when you are under the wrath of God in hell? Or that your flesh was once provided with variety of delights, when it is turned to rottenness, and must be raised to torments? Hold on therefore in faith, and holiness, and hope, though earth and hell should rage against you, though all the world by force or flattery, should do the worst they can to hinder you. This is your trial; your warfare is the resisting of deceit, and of all that would tempt you to consent to the means of your own destruction: consent not, and you conquer: conquer and you are crowned. The combat is all about your wills; yield, and you have lost the day. If the prating of ungodly fools, or the contemptuous jeers of hardened sinners, or the frowns of unsanctified superiors, could

<sup>z</sup> Phil. ii. 12.

<sup>a</sup> Matt. vii. 13. Luke xii. 24.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 24.

<sup>c</sup> 1 Pet. iv. 18.

<sup>d</sup> Matt. xvi. 26.



prevail against the Spirit of Christ, and the workings of an enlightened mind, then what man could be saved? You deserve damnation, if you will run into it to avoid a mock, or the loss of any thing that man can take from you. You are unmeet for heaven, if you can part with it to save your purses. "Fear not them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but fear him that can destroy both soul and body in hell<sup>e</sup>." Obey God, though all the world forbid you. No power can save you from his justice: and none of them can deprive you of his reward. Though you lose your heads, you shall save your crowns; you no way save your lives so certainly, as by such losing them. "One thing is necessary<sup>f</sup>;" do that with speed, and care, and diligence, which must be done, or you are lost for ever. They that are now against your much and earnest praying, will shortly cry as loud themselves in vain. When it is too late, how fervently will they beg for mercy, that now deride you for valuing and seeking it in time! But "then they shall call upon God, but he will not answer; they shall seek him early, but shall not find him: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of his counsel, but despised all his reproof<sup>g</sup>."

Up therefore and work with all thy might. Let unbelievers trifle, that know not that the righteous God stands over them, and know not that they are now to work for everlasting, and know not that heaven or hell is at the end. Let them delay, and laugh, and play, and dream away their time, that are drunk with prosperity, and mad with fleshly lusts and pleasures, and have lost their reason in the cares, and delusions, and vainglory of the world. But shall it be so with thee whose eyes are opened, who seest the God, the heaven, the hell, which they do but hear of as unlikely things? Wilt thou live awake, as they that are asleep? Wilt thou do in the daylight, as they do in the dark? Shall freemen live as satan's slaves? Shall the living lie as still and useless as the dead? "Work then while it is day, for the night is coming when none can work<sup>h</sup>."

It is not the works of the Mosaical law, nor works that are conceited for their proper value to deserve any thing at

<sup>e</sup> Matt. x. 28.<sup>f</sup> Matt. x. 39.<sup>g</sup> Prov. i. 24 to the end.<sup>h</sup> John ix. 4.

the hands of God, that I am all this while persuading you to: but it is the works prescribed you by Christ in the Gospel, according to which you shall be shortly judged to joy or misery, by Christ himself, that will call you to account. These must be done with all your might.

*Object.* 'But (you will say perhaps) alas, what might have we? We have no sufficiency of ourselves; without Christ we can do nothing! And this we find when it comes to the trial.'

*Ans.* 1. It is not a might that is originally thine own, that I am calling thee to exercise; but that which thou hast already received from God, and that which he is ready to bestow. Use well but all the might thou hast, and thou shalt find thy labour is not vain. Even the strength of nature, and of common grace, are talents which thou must improve.

2. Art thou willing to use the might thou hast, and to have more, and use it if thou hadst it? If thou art, thou hast then the strength of Christ: thou standest not, and workest not by thy own strength; his promise is engaged to thee, and his strength is sufficient for thee. But if thou art not willing, thou art without excuse; when thou hadst heaven and hell set open in the word of God to make thee willing, God will distinguish thy wilfulness from unwilling weakness.

3. There is more power in all of you than you use, or than you are well aware of. It wanteth but awakening to bring it into act. Do you not find in your repentings, that the change is more in your will than in your power? and in the awaking of your will and reason into act, than in the addition of mere abilities? and that therefore you befool yourselves for your sins and your neglects, and wonder that you had no more use of your understandings? Let but a storm at sea, or violent sickness, or approaching death, rouse up and waken the powers which you have, and you will find there was much more asleep in you than you used.

I shall therefore next endeavour to awaken your abilities, or tell you how you should awaken them.

When your souls are drowsy, and you are forgetting your God, and your latter end, and matters of eternity have little force and favour with you; when you grow lazy and

superficial, and religion seems a lifeless thing, and you do your duty as if it were in vain, or against your wills; when you can lose your time, and delay repentance; and friends, and profit, and reputation, and pleasure, can be heard against the word of God, and take you off; when you do all by the halves, and languish in your Christian course, as near to death; stir up your souls with the urgency of such questions as these?

*Quest. 1.* 'Can I do no more than this for God?' Who gave me all? Who deserveth all? Who seeth me in my duties and my sins? When he puts me purposely on the trial, what I can do for his sake and service, can I do no more? Can I love him no more? And obey, and watch, and work no more?

*Quest. 2.* 'Can I do no more than this for Christ?' For him that did so much for me? that lived so exactly; obeyed so perfectly; walked so inoffensively and meekly; despising all the baits, and honours, and riches of the world? That loved me to the death; and offered me freely all his benefits, and would bring me to eternal glory? Are these careless, cold and dull endeavours my best return for all this mercy?

*Quest. 3.* 'Can I do no more, when my salvation is the prize?' When heaven or hell depend much on it? When I know this beforehand, and may see in the glass of the Holy Scriptures what is prepared for the diligent and the negligent, and what work there is and will be for ever in heaven and hell on these accounts? Could I not do more, if my house were on fire, or my estate, or life, or friend in danger, than I do for my salvation?

*Quest. 4.* 'Can I do no more for the souls of men?' When they are undone for ever if they be not speedily delivered? Is this my love and compassion to my neighbour, my servant, friend or child?

*Quest. 5.* 'Can I do no more for the church of God?' For the public good? For the peace and welfare of the nation and our posterity? In suppressing sin? In praying for deliverance? Or in promoting works of public benefit?

*Quest. 6.* 'Can I do no more, that have loitered so long?' And go no faster, that have slept till the evening of my days, when diligence must be the discovery of my repentance?



*Quest. 7.* ‘Can I do no more, that know not now but I am doing my last?’ That see how fast my time makes haste, and know I must be quickly gone? That know it must be *now or never*; and that this is all the time I shall have, on which an endless life dependeth?

*Quest. 8.* ‘Can I do no better, when I know beforehand, what different aspects diligence and negligence will have, to the awakened soul in the review?’ What a comfort it will be at death and judgment, to be able to say, ‘I did my best, or loitered not away the time I had?’ And what a vexatious, and heart-disquieting thing it will then be, to look back on time as irrecoverably lost, and on a life of trial, as cast away upon impertinencies, while the work that we lived for lay undone? Shall I now by trifling prepare such griping and tormenting thoughts, for my awakened conscience?

*Quest. 9.* ‘Can I do no more, when I am sure I cannot do too much, and am sure there is nothing else to be preferred?’ And that it is this I live for; and that life is for action, and disposeth thereunto, (and holy life for holy action): and that it is better not live, than not attain the ends of living; when I have so many and unwearied enemies; when sloth is my danger, and the advantage of my enemy; when I know that resolution and vigorous diligence, is so necessary that all is lost without it? Will temptations be resisted, and self denied, and concupiscence mortified, and fleshly desires tamed and subdued, and sin cast out, and a holy communion with heaven maintained with idleness and sloth? Will families be well ordered, and church, or city, or countries be well governed? Will the careless sinners that I am bound to help, be converted and saved, with sitting still, and with some heartless, cold endeavours?

*Quest. 10.* ‘Can I do no more that have so much help?’ That have mercies of all sorts encouraging me, and creatures attending me; that have health to enable me, or affliction to remember and excite me, that have such a master, such a work, such a reward, as better cannot be desired; who is less excusable for neglect than I?

*Quest. 11.* ‘Could I do no more, if I were sure, that my salvation lay on this one duty?’ That according to this prayer, it should go with me for ever; or if the soul of my child, or servant, or neighbour must speed for ever, as my

endeavours speed with them now for their conversion? for aught I know it may be thus.

*Quest.* 12. 'Would I have God to come with the spur and rod?' How do I complain when affliction is upon me? And will I neither endure it, nor be quickened without it? Is it not better mend my pace and work, on easier terms?

I would not have distressed souls to use these considerations merely to disquiet themselves for their infirmities, and so live in heaviness and self-vexation, because they cannot be so good as they desire, or do as much and as well as they should do: it is not despair that will mend the matter, but make it worse. But I would wish the lazy, slothful soul, to plead these Questions with itself, and try whether they have no quickening power, if closely urged, and seriously considered.

Believe it, sirs, it is the deceitfulness of prosperity that keeps up the reputation of a slothful life, and makes holy diligence seem unnecessary. When affliction comes, awakened reason is ashamed of this, and seeth it as an odious thing.

By this time you may see, what difference there is between the judgment of God, and of the world, and what to think of the understandings of those men (be they high or low, learned or unlearned) that hate or oppose this holy diligence. God bids us love, and seek, and serve him, with all our heart, and soul, and might: and these men call them Zealots, and Precisians, and Puritans, that endeavour it; though, alas, they fall exceeding short, when they have done their best. It is one of the most wonderful monstrosities and deformities that ever befel the nature of man, that men, that learned men, that men that in other things are wise, should seriously think that the utmost diligence to obey the Lord and save our souls, is needless, and that ever they should take it for a crime, and make it a matter of reproach: that the serious, diligent obeying of God's laws, should be the matter of the common disdain and hatred of the world; that no men are more generally abhorred, and tossed up and down by impatient men; that great and small, the rulers and vulgar rabble, in most places of the earth cannot endure them. To think how the first man that ever was born into

the world, did hate his own brother till he had proceeded to murder him, because he served God better than himself, "because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous <sup>i</sup>." And how constantly this horrid, unnatural madness hath succeeded and raged in the world from Cain until this day! It is not in vain that the Holy Ghost addeth, in the next words, "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you <sup>k</sup>," implying that we are apt to marvel at it, as I confess I have oft and greatly done. Methinks, it is so wonderful a plague and stain in nature, that it doth very much to confirm me of the truth of Scripture; of the doctrine of man's fall and original sin, and the necessity of a Reconciler, and of renewing grace.

Distracted, miserable souls! Is it not enough for you to refuse your own salvation, but you must be angry with all that will not imitate you! Is it not mad enough, and bad enough to choose damnation, but you must be offended with all that are not of your mind? If you will not believe God, that without regeneration, conversion, holiness, and a heavenly, spiritual life, there is no salvation to be hoped for <sup>l</sup>, must we all be unbelievers with you? If you will laugh at hell till you are in it, must we do so too? If God and glory seem less worth to you than your fleshly pleasure for a time, must we renounce our Christianity, and our reason, for fear of differing from you? If you dare differ from your Maker, and the Redeemer, and the Holy Ghost, and all the prophets, apostles, and evangelists, and all that ever came to heaven, might not we be bold to differ from you? If you will needs be ungodly, and choose your everlasting woe, be patient with them that have more understanding, and dare not be so hardy as to leap after you into the unquenchable fire: mock not at holiness if you have no mind of it. Hinder not them that "strive to enter in at the strait gate," if you refrain yourselves. Be not so desirous of company to hell. It will prove no comfort to you, or abatement of your pain.

But because you have the faces to contradict the God of truth, and to reproach that work which he commandeth, and to say, 'What needs so much ado?' when he bids us do it with all our might; I will briefly tell you what you are doing,

<sup>i</sup> 1 John iii. 12.

<sup>k</sup> 1 John iii. 13.

<sup>l</sup> 1 John iii. 3, 5, 6. Matt. xviii. 3. Heb. xii. 14. Rom. viii. 9—13.



and shew you the ugly face of the scorner, and the filthy hearts of the enemies of holiness, that if it may be, you may loathe yourselves.

1. These enemies of holy diligence, deny God with their works and lives, and are practical atheists ; and it seems are so near of kin to “ that wicked one <sup>m</sup>,” that they would have all others to do so too. And then how soon would earth be turned into hell ! The case is plain : if God deserve not to be loved and served with all the heart, and soul, and might, he is not God. And if thy wealth, or honour, or flesh, or friend deserveth more of thy love, and care, and diligence than God, then that is thy God that deserveth best. See now what these deriders of purity and obedience do think of God, and of the world.

2. These Cainites do blaspheme the governor of the world : when he hath given laws to the creatures that he made of nothing, these wretches deride and hate men for obeying them. If God have not commanded that which you oppose, contradict it, and spare not : I would you were much more against that pretended religion which he commandeth not. But if he have commanded it, and yet you dare revile them as too pure and precise that would obey it, what do you but charge the King of saints with making laws that are not to be obeyed ? which must needs imply that they are foolish, or bad, though made by the most Wise and Good.

3. These enemies of holiness oppose the practice of the very first principles of all religion : for “ He that cometh to God, must believe that God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him <sup>n</sup>.” And it is diligent seeking him that they hate and set themselves against.

4. Do not they judge heaven to be less worth than earth ; when they will do less for it, and would have others to do so too ?

5. They would have us all unchristian and unman ourselves, as if there were no life to come ; as if our reason and all our faculties were given us in vain. For if they are not given us for greater matters than all the honours and pleasures of the world, they are in vain, or worse ; and the life of man is but a dream and misery. Were not a beast less miserable, if this were all ?

<sup>m</sup> See 1 John iii. 12.

<sup>n</sup> Heb. xi. 6.

6. How base a price do these Cainites set on the immortal soul of man, that think it not worth so much ado, as the careful obedience of the laws of Christ? Not worth so much as they do themselves for their filthy sins and perishing flesh? But would have us so mad as to sell heaven and our souls for a little sinful sloth and ease.

7. These enemies of holiness would have men take their mercies for their hurt, and their greatest blessings for a burden or a plague, and to run into hell to be delivered from them. Why man, dost thou know what holiness is? and what it is to have access to God? I tell thee it is the foretaste of heaven on earth. It is the highest glory, and sweetest delight, and chiefest commodity to the soul. And art thou afraid of having too much of this? What, thou that hast none (which should make thee tremble), art thou afraid of having too much? Thou that never fearest too much money, nor too much honour, nor too much health, art thou afraid of too much spiritual health and holiness? What shall be thy desire, if thou loathe and fly from thy felicity?

8. You that are loyal subjects, take heed of these ungodly scorners; for by consequence they would tempt you to despise your king, and make a mock at the obeying of his commands and laws. For if a man persuade you to despise a judge, he implieth that you may despise a constable. No king is so great in comparison of God, as a fly or worm is to that king. He therefore that would relax the laws of God, and make it seem a needless thing to obey him diligently and exactly, implieth that obedience to any of the sons of men, is much more needless.

And you that are children or servants, take heed of the doctrine of these men. Masters, admit it not into your families. If he be worthy to be scorned as a Puritan or Precisian that is careful to please and obey the Lord; what scorn do your children or servants deserve, if they will be obedient and pleasing to such as you?

9. All you that are poor tradesmen, take heed of the consequences of the Cainites' scorns, lest it make you give over the labours of your calling, and turn yourselves and families into beggary. For if heaven be not worth your greatest labour, your bodies are not worth the least.

10. These Cainites speak against the awakened con-

sciences, and the confessions of all the world. Whatsoever they may say in the dream of their blind presumption and security, at last, when death hath opened their eyes, they all cry, ‘O that we had been saints!’ “O that we might die the death of the righteous, and that our last end might be as his!” O that we had spent that time, and care, and labour for our souls, which we spent on that which now is gall to our remembrance!’ And yet these men will take no warning, but now oppose and deride that course that all the world do wish at last they had been as zealous for as any.

11. The enemy himself hath a conscience within him, that either grudgeth against his malicious impiety, and witnesseth that he abuseth them that are far better than himself, or at least will shortly call him to a reckoning, and tell him better what he did, and make him change his face and tune, and wish himself in the case of those that he did oppose.

12. To conclude, the Cainite is of that wicked one<sup>o</sup>, of his father the devil<sup>p</sup>; and is his walking, speaking instrument on earth, saying what he himself would say: he is the open enemy of God: for who are his enemies, but the enemies of holiness, of his laws, of our obedience, of his image, and of his saints? And how will Christ deal at last with his enemies<sup>q</sup>? O that they knew, that foreseeing, they might escape! This is the true, the ugly picture of a Cainite, or enemy of a holy life, that reproacheth serious diligence as a precise and needless thing, when God commandeth us, and death, and the grave, and eternity admonish us to do his work with all our might. “Now consider this ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you<sup>r</sup>.”

But of all the opposers of serious holiness in the world, there are none more inexcusable and deplorably miserable, than those that profess themselves Ministers of Christ. Would one believe that had not known them, that there are such men in the world? Alas, there are too many. Though education, and the laws of the land engage them to preach true doctrine, yet are they false teachers in the application. For they never well learned the holy and heavenly doctrine which they preach, nor digested it, or received the power and impress of it upon their hearts; and therefore, retaining their

<sup>o</sup> 1 John iii. 12.

<sup>p</sup> John viii. 42. 44.

<sup>q</sup> Luke xix. 27.

<sup>r</sup> Psal. l. 22.



natural corruptions, impiety, and enmity to the life, and power, and practice of that doctrine, they indirectly destroy what directly they would seem to build; and preach both for God, and against him, for Christ and the Holy Spirit, and against them; for godliness, and against it, both in the same sermon. In general, they must needs speak for the word of God, and a holy life; but when they come to the particulars, they secretly reproach it, and condemn the parts, while they commend the whole. In general, they speak well of religious, godly, holy people; but when they meet with them, they hate them, and make them *Precisians*, “a sect that is every where spoken against, pestilent fellows, and movers of sedition,” as the apostles were accused<sup>s</sup>; and any thing that malice can invent to make them odious. And what they cannot prove, they will closely intimate, in the false application of their doctrines, describing them so as may induce the hearers to believe that they are a company of self-conceited hypocrites, factious, proud, disobedient, turbulent, peevish, affecting singularity, desiring to engross the reputation of godliness to themselves, but secretly as bad as others. And when they have thus represented them to the ignorant sort of people, they have made the way of godliness odious, and sufficiently furnished miserable souls with prejudice and dislike; so that because the persons are thus made hateful to them, all serious diligence for heaven, all tenderness of conscience, and fear of sinning, all heavenly discourse, and serious preaching, reading, or praying, are also made odious for their sakes; for hearing so ill of the persons, and seeing that these are the things wherein they differ from others, they reduce their judgment of their practices to their foresettled judgment of the persons. When their diligence in their families, in prayer and instructions, in reading and fruitful improvement of the Lord’s-day, or any other actions of strictness and holy industry are mentioned, these ungodly ministers are ready to blot them with some open calumnies, or secret reproaches, or words of suspicion, to vindicate their own unholy lives, and make people believe that serious piety is faction and hypocrisy. The black tincture of their minds, and the design and drift of their preaching may be perceived in the jeers, girds, and slanderous in-

<sup>s</sup> Acts xxiv. 5. xxviii. 22.

timations against the most diligent servants of the Lord. The controverted truths that such maintain, they represent as errors : their unavoidable errors they represent as heresy : their duties they represent as faults ; and their human frailties, as enormous crimes : they feign them to be guilty of the things that never entered into their thoughts : and if some that have professed godliness, be guilty of greater crimes, they would make men believe that the rest are such, and that the family of Christ is to be judged of by a Judas, and the scope is to intimate that either their profession is culpable, or needless, and less commendable. Regeneration they would make to be but the entrance into the church by baptism, and any further conversion, than the leaving off some gross sins, and taking up some heartless forms of duty, to be but a fancy or unnecessary thing : and they would draw poor people to believe, that if they be born again sacramentally of water, they may be saved, though they be not born again by the renewing of the Holy Spirit. Being strangers themselves to the mystery of regeneration, and to the life of faith and a heavenly conversation, and to the loving and serving God with all their soul and might ; they first endeavour to quiet themselves with a belief that these are but fancies or unnecessary, and then to deceive the people with that by which they have first deceived themselves.

And it is worthy your observation, what it is in religion that these formal hypocrites are against. There are scarce any words so sound or holy, but they can bear them, if they be but deprived of their life : nor scarce any duty, if it be but mortified, but they can endure. But it is the spirit and life of all religion which they cannot bear. As a body differeth from a carcase, not by the parts, but by the life ; so there is a certain life in preaching, and prayer, and all other acts of worship, which is perceived by several sorts of hearers. The godly perceive it to their edification and delight : for here it is that they are quickened and encouraged. Life begetteth life, as fire kindleth fire. The ungodly often perceive it to their vexation, if not to their conviction and conversion : this life in preaching, praying, discipline, reproof, and conference, is it which biteth, and galleth, and disquieteth their consciences. And this they kick and rail against : this is the thing that will not let them sleep quietly in their

sin and misery ; but is calling and jogging them to awake, and will not let them sin in peace, but will either convert them, or torment them before the time. It is the life of religion that the hypocrite wants ; and the life that he is most against. A painted fire burneth not : a dead lion biteth not : the carcase of an enemy is not formidable. Let the word of that sermon that most offendeth them, be separated from the life, and put into a homily, and said or read in a formal, drowsy, or a schoolboy's tone, and they can bear it and commend it. Let the same words of prayer which now they like not, be said over as a lifeless, customary form, and they can like it well. I speak not against the use of forms, but the abuse of them : not against the body, but the carcase. Let forms themselves be used by a spiritual, serious man, in a spiritual, serious manner, with the interposition of any quickening exhortations, or occasional passages, that tend to keep them awake and attentive, and make them feel what you mean and are about, and you shall see they love not such animated forms. It is the living Christian, and lively worship, and serious, spiritual religion, which they hate : kill it and they can bear it. Let the picture of my enemy be nearer and comelier than his person was, and I can endure it in my bedchamber, better than himself in the meanest dress. It is the living Christians that in all parts of the world are chiefly persecuted. Let them be once dead, and dead-hearted hypocrites themselves will honour them, especially at a sufficient distance : they will destroy the living saints, and keep holydays for the dead ones. " Woe unto you Scribes, and Pharisees, hypocrites ; because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell ? " The dog that will not meddle with the dead creature, will pursue the living ; and when he sees it stir no more, will leave it. Christianity without seriousness is not Christianity, and therefore not liable to the hatred of its



enemies as such. Say any thing, and do any thing how strict soever, if you will but act it as a player on the stage, or do it coldly, slightly, and as if you were but in jest, you may have their approbation. But it is this life, and seriousness, and worshipping God in spirit and truth, that convinceth them that they themselves are lifeless, and therefore troubleth their deceitful peace, and therefore must not have their friendship. If it were the mere bulk of duty that they were weary of, how comes it to pass that a Papist at his psalter, beads, and mass-books, can spend more hours without much weariness or opposition, than we can do in serious worship? Turn all but into words and beads, and canonical hours and days, and shews and ceremony, and you may be as religious as you will, and be righteous overmuch, and few will hate, or reproach, or persecute you among them, as too precise or strict. But living Christians and worship come among them like fire, that burneth them, and makes them smart, with "a word that is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart <sup>u</sup>."

And the enmity of the Cainites may teach the Christian, what he should be, and wherein his excellency lieth. It is life and seriousness that your enemies hate; and therefore it is life and seriousness that you must above all maintain, though dead-hearted hypocrites never so much oppose and contradict you.

O sirs, they are no trifles, but the greatest things that God hath set before you in his word, and called you out to prosecute and possess: and your time of seeking them is short, and therefore you have no time for trifles, nor any to lose in idleness and sloth. And of all men, preachers should be most sensible of this. If they were not against serious holiness in others, it is double wickedness for such as they, to be against it in themselves. It is great things that they have to study and to speak of; and such as call for the greatest seriousness, and reverence, and gravity in the speaker, and condemn all trifling in matter or in manner. A man that is sent of Christ to run for an immortal crown, or to direct others in such a race, to save his own, or other

<sup>u</sup> Heb. iv. 12.

men's souls from endless misery, should be ashamed to fill up his time with trifles, or to be slight and cold about such great and weighty things: all the heart, and soul, and might, is little enough for matters of such unspeakable importance. When I hear preachers or people spend their time in little, impertinent, fruitless things, that do but divert them from the great business of their lives, or to dally with the greatest matters, rather than to use them, and treat of them with a seriousness suitable to their importance, I oft think of the words of Seneca the serious moralist, as shaming the hypocrisy of such trifling preachers and professors of the Christian faith; '*Verba copiosa componis, et interrogans vincula nectis, et dicis, Acuta sunt ista! Nihil acutius arista; et in quo est utilis? Quædam inutilia, et inefficacia ipsa subtilitas reddit:*' that is, 'You compose copious words, and tie hard knots by curious questions; and you say, O these are acute things! What is more acute than the peal of corn? and yet what is it good for? Subtlety itself makes some things unprofitable and ineffectual.'

"*Istæ ineptiæ poetis relinquantur, quibus aures oblectare propositum est et dulcem fabulam nectere. Sed qui ingenia sanare, et fidem in rebus humanis retinere, ac memoriam officiorum animis ingerere volunt, serio loquantur, et magnis viribus rem agant;*" that is, 'Leave these toys or fooleries to poets, whose business is to delight the ear, and to compose a pleasant fable. But they that mean to heal men's understandings, and retain credibility among men, and to bring into men's minds the remembrance of their duties, must speak seriously, and do their business with all their might.'

'*Demens omnibus merito videret——*' 'He would justly by all be taken for a madman, that when the town expecteth to be stormed by the enemies, and others are busy at work for their defence, will sit idle, proposing some curious questions.'—— '*Nunquid tibi demens videtur, si istis impendero operam, et nunc obsideor? quid agam? mors me sequitur, vita fugit; adversis hæc me doce aliquid: effice ut ego mortem non timeam, et vita me non effugiat.*' 'And shall not I be taken for a madman, if I should busy myself about such things, that am now besieged? What shall I do? Death pursueth me: life flieth from me: teach me some-

thing against these: make death not dreadful to me, or life not to fly from me.' 'Si multum esset ætatis, parce dispensandum erat, ut sufficeret necessariis: nunc quæ dementia est, supervacua discere in tanta temporis egestate!' 'If we had much time, we should sparingly lay it out, that it might suffice for necessary things: but now what a madness is it, to learn things needless or superfluous in so great a scarcity of time!' 'Metire ergo ætatem tuam: tam multa non capit.' 'Measure thy age: it is not enough for so many things.' 'Relinque istum ludum literarum philosophis. Rem magnificam! ad syllabas vocant qui animum minuta discendo diminuunt et conterunt, et id agunt, ut philosophia potius difficilis quam magna videatur: Socrates, qui totam philosophiam revocavit ad mores, hanc summam dixit esse sapientiam, bona malaque distinguere.' 'Leave this learned play to philosophers: a gallant business! They call us to syllables, and debase and depress the mind by learning such little, trivial things, and make philosophy rather to seem a matter of difficulty than great. Socrates, that revoked all philosophy to manners, did call this the highest wisdom, to distinguish good and evil.'

Did a Seneca see by the light of nature, so much of the necessity of seriousness and diligence, about the matters of the soul? And so much of the madness of spending words and time, and trifles? And yet shall there be found a man among professed Christians, and among the preachers of faith and holiness, that plead for trifling, and scorn at seriousness, and account them moderate and wise that a heathen brands as toytish and distracted?

What is it that cloudeth the glory of Christianity, and keepeth so great a part of the world in heathenism and infidelity, but this, that among Christians there are so few that are Christians indeed? And those few are so obscured by the multitude of formal, trifling hypocrites, that Christianity is measured and judged of by the lives of those that are no Christians? Religion is a thing to be demonstrated, and honoured, and commended by practice: words alone are ineffectual to represent its excellency to so blind a world, that must know by feeling, having lost their sight. In our professed faith we mount unto the heavens, and leave poor unbelievers wallowing in the dirt. O what a transcendent,



inconceivable glory, do we profess to expect with God unto eternity, and what manner of persons should they be, in all holy conversation and godliness, that look for such a life as this ! How basely should they esteem those transitory things, that are the food and felicity of the sensual world ! How patiently should they undergo contempt and scorn, and whatsoever man can inflict upon them ! How studiously should they devote and refer all their time, and strength, and wealth, and interest, to this their glorious, blessed end ! How seriously should they speak of, and how industriously should they seek, such sure, such near, such endless joys ! Did professed Christians more exactly conform their hearts and lives to their profession and holy rule, their lives would confute the reproaches of their enemies, and command a reverent and awful estimation from the observers ; and do more to convince the unbelieving world of the truth and dignity of the Christian faith, than all the words of the most subtle disputants. Christianity being an affecting practical science, must practically and affectionately be declared, according to its nature : arguments do but paint it out : and pictures do no more make known its excellency, than the picture of meat and drink makes known its sweetness. When a doctrine so holy, is visibly exemplified, and liveth, and walketh, and worketh in serious Christians before the world ; either this or nothing will convince them, and constrain them to glorify our Lord, and say, that God is among us, or in us of a truth \*. But it is unchristian lives, that darkeneth the glory of the Christian faith. When men that profess such glorious hopes, shall be as sordidly earthly, and sensual, and ambitious, and impotent, and impatient as other men, they seem but fantastical dissemblers.

And yet shall there be found such a perfidious wretch under the heavens of God, as a professed Minister of Christ, that shall subtly or openly labour to make an exact, and holy, and heavenly conversation a matter of reproach and scorn, and that under pretence of reproving the sins of hypocrites and schismatics, shall make the most exact conformity to the Christian rule, and most faithful obedience to the almighty Sovereign, to seem to be but hypocrisy or self-conceitedness, or needless trouble, if not the way of sedition,

\* Matt. v. 16. 1 Cor. xiv. 25,

and public trouble, and turning all things upside-down? That cannot reprove sin, without malicious, insinuating slanders or suspicions against the holy law, and holy life, that are most contrary to sin, as life to death, as health to sickness, and as light to darkness?

For any man, especially any professed Christian, any where to oppose or scorn at godliness, is a dreadful sign, as well as a heinous sin; but for a Preacher of Godliness to oppose and scorn at godliness, and that in the pulpit, while he pretendeth to promote it, and plead for it in the name of Christ, is a sin that should strike the heart of man with horror to conceive of.

Though I cannot subscribe myself to that passage in the second part of the tenth Homily, Tom. 2. p. 150. (however I very much love and honour the Book of Homilies) yet for their sakes that not only can subscribe to it, but would have all kept out of the ministry that cannot, and that take it for that doctrine of the church of England which they will believe and preach, I will recite it to the terror of the guilty, not to drive to despair, but to awake them, or to shame them for their opposition to the ways of godliness.

Expounding Psalm i. 1. "Blessed is the man that hath not walked after the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of the scornful," having shewed who are the "ungodly" and the "sinners," it addeth these words :

"The third sort he calleth scorers; that is, a sort of men whose hearts are so stuffed with malice, that they are not contented to dwell in sin, and to lead their lives in all kind of wickedness, but also they do contemn and scorn in others all godliness, true religion, all honesty and virtue. Of the two first sorts of men, I will not say, but they may take repentance, and be converted unto God. Of the third sort, I think I may without danger of God's judgment pronounce, that never any yet were converted unto God by repentance, but continued still in their abominable wickedness, heaping up to themselves damnation against the day of God's inevitable judgment."

Though I dare not say, but some such have repented, yet let the scorers that believe this, remember, that they subscribe the sentence of their own condemnation.

Though I look upon this sort of the enemies of holiness as those that are as unlikely to be recovered and saved, as almost any people in the world, except apostates and malicious blasphemers of the Holy Ghost, yet in compassion to the people and themselves, I shall plead the cause of God with their consciences, and try what light can do with their understandings, and the terrors of the Lord with their hardened hearts.

1. A Preacher of the Gospel should much excel the people in understanding: and therefore this sin is greater in them than other men: what means, what light do they sin against! Either thou knowest the necessity of striving for salvation with the greatest diligence, or thou dost not. If not, what a sin and shame is it to undertake the sacred office of the ministry, while thou knowest not the things that are necessary to salvation, and that which every infant in the faith doth know! But if thou dost know it, how dost thou make shift maliciously to oppose it, without feeling the beginnings of hell upon thy conscience? When it is thy work to read the Scriptures, and meditate on them, dost thou not read thy doom, and meditate terror? How canst thou choose but perceive that the scope of the word of God is contrary to the bent of thy affections and suggestions? Yea, what is more evident by the light of nature, than that God and salvation cannot be regarded with too much holy seriousness, exactness and industry? Should not the best things be best loved; and the greatest matters have our greatest care? And is there any thing to be compared with God and our eternal state? O what overwhelming subjects are these to a sober and considerate mind! What toys are all things in comparison of them! And yet dost thou make light of them, and also teach men so to do; as if there were something else that better deserved men's greatest care and diligence than they? What! a Preacher, and not a Believer! Or a Believer, and yet not see enough in the matters of eternity to engage all our powers of soul and body against all the world that should stand in competition!

2. Is it not sinful and terrible enough, to be thyself in a carnal, unrenewed state<sup>y</sup>; and to be without the Spirit and life of Christ<sup>z</sup>; but thou must be so cruel as to make others

<sup>y</sup> Rom. i. 13.

<sup>z</sup> Rom. i. 9.



miserable also? "But to the wicked, saith God, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes? or that thou shalt take my covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee <sup>a</sup>?" "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach the same, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven <sup>b</sup>."

3. What an aggravation is it of thy impiety and soul-murder, that thou art bound by office to teach men that life of holiness which thou opposest; and to persuade them to that with all thy might, which thou endeavourest closely and cunningly to disgrace! And wilt thou be a traitor to Christ in the name of a Messenger and Preacher of the Gospel? Wilt thou engage thyself to promote his interest, and to use all thy skill and power to build men up in holiness and obedience; and when thou hast done this, wilt thou disgrace and hinder it? Dost thou take on thee to go on the message of Christ, and then speak against him? We do not find that Judas dealt thus with him: when he sent him as he did other preachers, we read not that he preached against him. O let not my soul be numbered with such men in the day of the Lord! It will be easier for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for the refusers of the word and grace of Christ. What then will be the doom of the opposers! And above all of those treacherous opposers, that pretend themselves to propagate and promote them!

If the wit and malice of satan's instruments were sharpened against the ways and servants of the Lord, it belongs to you to plead Christ's cause, and shame these absurd, unreasonable gainsayers, and stop the mouth of impious contradiction: and will you join with gainsayers, and secretly or openly say as they? Who should confound the deriders of a holy life but you? Who should lay open the excellencies of Christ, the glory of heaven, the terrors of the Lord, and all other obligations to the most serious religiousness, but you that have undertaken it as your calling and employment? If any man in the parish were so atheistical and brutish, as to think God unworthy of our dearest love, our most exact obedience, and most laborious service, who should

<sup>a</sup> Psal. l. 16, 17.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. v. 19.

display this atheist's folly, but you that are doubly (as Christians and ministers) obliged to defend the honour of your Lord? If any of the people should fall into such a dream or dotage, as to question the necessity of our utmost diligence in our preparations for eternal life, who should awake them by lifting up their voices as a trumpet, and help to recover their understandings, but you that are the watchmen, and know their blood will be required at your hands, if you give them not loud and timely warning? If any subtle, malicious servant of the devil, should plead against the necessity of holiness, and dissuade the people from serving God with all their might, who should be ready to confirm the weak, and strengthen and encourage them that are thus assaulted, and help to keep up their zeal and forwardness, but you that are leaders in the army of the Lord? Is it not a holy God that you are engaged to serve? and a holy church in which you have your station? and a communion of saints in which you have undertaken to administer the holy things of God? Have you not read what was done to Nadab, and Abihu, when Moses told Aaron, "This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before the people I will be glorified<sup>c</sup>." Is it not a holy law and Gospel which you publish? You have undertaken to warn the slothful, the sensual, the worldly, and the profane, "that they strive to enter in at the strait gate, and seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness<sup>d</sup>," and to give diligence to make sure their calling and election<sup>e</sup>," and to "give all diligence in adding virtue to their faith<sup>f</sup>," and "with all diligence to keep their hearts<sup>g</sup>." And are you the men that would quench their zeal, and destroy the holy diligence which you should preach? The Lord touch your hearts, and recover you in time, or how woful will it be with such hardened hypocrites, that in the light, and in his family and livery, and under his standard and colours, dare prove traitors and enemies to the Lord.

4. And what an addition is it to your guilt, that you speak against God in his own name? By office you are to deliver his message, and speak to the people in his name, and in his stead<sup>h</sup>. And dare you before the sun, and under

<sup>c</sup> Lev. x. 3.

<sup>d</sup> Luke xiii. 24. Matt. vi. 33.

<sup>e</sup> 2 Pet. i. 10.

<sup>f</sup> 2 Pet. i. 5.

<sup>g</sup> Prov. iv. 23.

<sup>h</sup> 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.

the heavens of God, and in his hearing, persuade men that the most holy God is against holiness? and the King of saints is an adversary to sanctity? and that he that made his holy law, is against the most exact obeying of it? Dare you prefix a 'Thus saith the Lord,' to so impious a speech as 'It is in vain to serve the Lord? What needs there so much ado for your salvation?' Dare you go to men as from the Lord, and say, 'You are too careful and diligent in his service! Less ado may serve the turn! What needs this fervour, and redeeming time! This is but Puritanism and preciseness. It is better to do as the most, and venture your souls without so much ado.' Who could at last hold up his face, or stand before the dreadful tribunal, that should be found in the guilt of such a crime! What! to put God into the similitude of satan, and describe the Most Holy as the enemy of holiness! and make him plead against himself, and disgrace his own image, and dissuade men from that which he himself hath made of necessity to their salvation! What viler blasphemy can be uttered!

5. And it aggravateth your sin, that your relation obligeth you to the most tender affections to your people. And yet that you should seduce them to damnation. For the nurse to poison them; for the parents to cut the children's throats, is worse than for an enemy to do it. If the devil, our professed enemy, should himself appear to us, and say, 'Prepare not so seriously for death. Be not so strict, and diligent, and holy,' it were not, in many respects, so bad as for you to do it, that should help to save us from his snares. You that profess yourselves their fathers; that should travail in birth till Christ be formed in your people's hearts! that should love your people as your own bowels, and tender the weak, and pity the wicked, and stick at no labour, suffering, or cost, that might advance their holiness, and further their salvation. For you to tempt men into a careless life, and turn them out of the holy way, is an aggravated cruelty. It is worse for the shepherd to destroy us than the wolf. Read Ezek. xxxiii. xxxiv.

6. Are you not ashamed thus to contradict yourselves? What can you find to preach from the word of God, that tendeth not to this holy diligence which you are against?



How can you make shift to preach an hour, and not acquaint men with the duty and necessity of seeking God with all their might? Do you not tell them, that “except they be converted and new born, they shall not enter into the kingdom of God<sup>i</sup>.” And “that without holiness none shall see the Lord<sup>k</sup>.” And “that if they live after the flesh, they shall die<sup>l</sup>.” And “that except their righteousness exceed the righteousness of Scribes and Pharisees, they shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven<sup>m</sup>.” And will you in your application, or private discourses unsay all this again, and give God and yourselves the lie? And let people see, that the pulpit is to you but as a stage, and that you believe not what you speak?

7. Consider that your place and calling maketh you the most successful servants of the devil, and so the most bloody murderers of souls, while you give your judgment against a strict and heavenly life. For a drunkard in an alehouse to mock the minister, and rail at serious religion, is less regarded by sober men, and small advantage to his master's cause; nay, the wickedness of his life is so great a shame to his judgment, that it inclineth many to think well of those that he speaks against. But when a man that pretendeth to learning and understanding, and to be himself a Pastor of the church, and Preacher of the mysteries of Christ, shall make them odious that are most careful of their souls, and most exact in pleasing God, and shall make all serious diligence for heaven to seem but intemperate zeal and self-conceitedness. And shall describe a saint as if the formal lifeless hypocrite, that giveth God but the leavings of the world, and never set his heart on heaven, were indeed the man. What a snare is here for the perdition of the ignorant! They that are naturally averse from holiness, and are easily persuaded to think that to be unnecessary or bad, which seems so much above them and against them, will be much confirmed in their mistakes and misery, when they hear their teachers speak without them, the same that satan by his suggestions doth within them. This turneth a trembling sinner into a hardened scorner. He that before went under the daily correction of his conscience, for neglecting God,

<sup>i</sup> John iii. 3. 5. Matt. xviii. 2.

<sup>k</sup> Heb. xii. 14.

<sup>l</sup> Rom. viii. 13.

<sup>m</sup> Matt. v. 20.

and omitting holy duties, and living to the flesh, grows bold and fearless, when he hears the preacher disgrace the stricter, purer way. By that time he hath heard awhile the fear of God derided as preciseness, and a tender conscience reproached as a scrupulous, foolish thing, his conscience grows more pliable to his lusts, and hath little more to say against them. When God's own professed ministers, that should be wiser and better than the people, are against this zeal and industry for heaven, the people will soon think, that at least it is tolerable in them. And they will sooner learn to deride a saint from a sermon, or discourse of a preacher, or a learned man, than from the scorns or talk of hundreds of the ignorant. And wilt thou teach them to hate godliness, who hast undertaken before the righteous God, to teach them to practise it? He that dispraiseth it, though under other names, and representeth it as odious, though masked with the title of some odious vice, doth indeed endeavour to make men hate it. And what a terrible account wilt thou have to make, when the seduction and transgression of all these sinners shall be charged upon thee. When Christ shall say to the haters, deriders, and opposers of his holy ways and servants, "Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it unto me." How durst you scorn the image of your Maker, and hate the saints whose communion you professed to believe; and deride or oppose that serious holiness, without which you had no hope of being saved? If then the sinners become your accusers, and say, 'Lord, we thought it had been but unnecessary preciseness, and that serious Christians had been but self-conceited, factious hypocrites, and that lip-service with a common worldly life, might have served the turn. We heard our preachers represent such strict and zealous men, as turbulent, seditious and refractory, as odious, and not as imitable. Their application was against them. Their discourse derided them. Of them we learnt it. We thought they were wiser and better than we. Of whom should we learn but of our teachers?' Wo to the teachers that ever they were born, that must be then found guilty of this crime.

If Adam's excuse was Eve's accusation, "The woman which thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat," and the woman's excuse did charge the ser-

pent, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat<sup>n</sup>," (though it freed not the excusers), how will it load you, when your people shall say, 'The teachers that we thought thou gavest us, did teach us, and go before us in setting against this holy diligence; and we did but learn of them, and follow them!'

8. Are not the people backward enough to the serving of God with all their might, unless you hinder them? Is not the corrupted heart of lapsed man averse enough to the matters of salvation, but you must make them worse? If you had to do with the best and holiest person in the world that walketh with God in the most heavenly conversation, he would tell you that his dull and backward heart hath no need of clogs, and pull-backs, and discouragements, but of all the help that can be afforded him, to quicken him up to greater diligence. The most zealous lament that they are so cold. The most heavenly lament that they are so earthly and so strange to heaven. The most laborious lament that they are so slothful, and the fruitfulest believers that they are so unprofitable; and those that are most watchful of their words and deeds, that they are so careless; and those that most diligently redeem their time, lament it that they lose so much; and those that walk most accurately and exactly, that they are so loose, and keep no closer to the rule. And yet darest thou increase the backwardness of the ungodly? Will not their carnal interest and lust serve turn to keep them from a holy life? Is not satan strong enough of himself? Will not the common distaste of godliness in the world, sufficiently prejudice and avert them without thy help? Do you see your people so forward to do too much for heaven, that you must pull them back? Cannot fools be damned without your furtherance? or is it a desirable work, and will it pay for your cost and labour? The way is up hill; the best of us are weak, and frequently ready to sit down! A thousand impediments are cast before us by satan and the world, to make us linger till the time be past, and many a charm of pleasure and diversion to make us sleep till the door be shut. And Ministers are sent to keep us walking, and take us by the hand, and lead us on, and remove impediments. And shall they set in with the ene-

<sup>n</sup> Gen. iii. 12, 13.



my, and be our chiefest hinderers? O treacherous guides! O miserable helps! Are not our dark understandings, our earthly, dull and backward hearts, our passions and troubled affections, our appetites and sensual inclinations, our natural strangeness and averseness to God, and heaven, and holiness, enough to hinder us without you? Are not all the temptations of the devil, the allurements of the flesh and world, the impediments of poverty and riches, of flattery and of frowns, of friends and foes, in our callings, and in our diversions, are not all these enough to cool and dull us, and keep us from serving God too much, and being too careful and diligent for our souls, but Preachers themselves must be our impediments and snares? Now the Lord deliver us from such impediments, and his church from such unhappy guides!

9. Consider whom thou imitatest in this. Is it Christ or satan? Christ calleth men to strive, to labour, to seek, to watch, to pray always, and not wax faint<sup>o</sup>. The apostles call men to be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; to be a peculiar people, zealous of good works; to pray continually; to be a chosen generation, a royal priesthood a holy nation, a peculiar people, to show forth the praises of him that hath called us, and offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ<sup>p</sup>." "To fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold upon eternal life<sup>q</sup>." "To serve God acceptably, being as a consuming fire, with reverence and godly fear<sup>r</sup>." "To be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord<sup>s</sup>." And dare you gainsay the Lord and his apostles, and concur with satan, and the Pharisees and enemies of Christ?

10. You do your worst to make the sacred office of the ministry to become contemptible, as Eli's sons did. Poor people that cannot sufficiently distinguish the doctrine from the application, the office from the person, the use from the abuse, will be tempted to run from the ordinances of God, and think the worse of others for your sakes, and suspect all their food, because you mix such poison in it. And the

<sup>o</sup> Luke xii. 24. John vi. 27. Matt. vi. 33. xxv. 13. Luke xviii. 1.

<sup>p</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 5. 9. 1 Thess. v. 17. Tit. ii. 14. Rom. xii. 11.

<sup>q</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 12.

<sup>r</sup> Heb. xii. 28, 29.

<sup>s</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 58.

more holy and necessary the office and work is, the greater is your sin in corrupting it, or making it suspected or abhorred.

Consider soberly of these things, and then go on and speak against a life of holy diligence if you dare.

I know you will say, 'It is not godliness, but singularity, or humour, or disobedience, or hypocrisy, or faction, that you oppose; and perhaps you will instance in some that are guilty of some of these, or seem so at the least.

But 1. I do here solemnly profess that I hate these crimes as well as you; and that it is not any part of my intention to plead for intemperance, disobedience in lawful things, for schism, or faction, or any irregularity. And this I here put in against those that are disposed to misunderstanding, and misreport us, and leave it as on record to prove them slanderers, that shall accuse me of defending any such thing. And I do protest against those on the other side, that will fetch encouragement for any transgression, from my necessary plea for the holy industry and vigilancy of believers. And, moreover, I do profess that it is only the opposers of holiness that I mean in this defence, and have not the least intent to intimate that any others are guilty of that crime that are not. But having premised this protestation, to prevent mistakes and false reports, I answer now to the guilty.

2. If it be crimes only that you are against, deliver yourself so, as may not lay reproach or suspicion on godliness, which is most opposite to all crimes. Cannot you preach against divisions, disobedience, or any other sin, without any scornful intimations or reflections against men's diligent serving of the Lord?

3. Why do not you commend those that are not liable to your accusations, and encourage them in holiness, and draw others to imitate them? And why do you not commend the good, where you discommend the evil that is commixt?

4. Shall health and life be made a scorn, because there are few but have some distemper and disease? Shall Christianity and holiness be secretly reproached, because all Christians have some fault to be accused of? If men be faulty, you should persuade them to be more strict and dili-

gent, and not less. It is for want of watchfulness and strictness that they sin. Nothing is more contrary to their faults than holiness. There is no other way for their full reformation. And therefore all true humbled Christians are ready to confess their faultiness themselves; but so far are they from thinking the worse of piety for it, that it is one great reason that moveth them to go on, and to read, and hear, and pray, and meditate, and do so much that they may get more strength against their faults. Must they think ill of food, and physic, and exercise, because they are infirm? All faithful ministers tell their people plainly of their sins (so far as they are acquainted with them) as well as you. But they do it not in a way reproachful to their holy diligence. They do not, therefore, call them off from godliness, nor tempt them to be less in the use of means, but more, by how much their need is greater. A holy heart, and a malignant heart, will shew their difference in the reproving of the same fault. The one layeth all the odium on the vice, and honoureth the holy obedience of the saints. The other fasteneth his sting upon the godly, and under pretence of dishonouring their faults, doth seek to fasten the dishonour on their holiness. And those that are so minded, will never want occasion or pretence, for the worst that satan would have them say. The church will never be without some hypocrites, and scandals, nor the best without some faults and passions; nor the holiest action without some mixture of human frailty and infirmity; nor will the very goodness and holiness of the action, be free from plausible calumnies and scorns, while there is the wit and venom of the serpent in the heads and hearts of wicked men.

How easy is it to put a name of ignominy upon every person, and every duty? To charge any man with hypocrisy, or pride. To take the wisest man for self-conceited, because he is not of the accuser's mind. To call our obedience to God by the name of disobedience unto man, when man forbids it, as they used the three witnesses<sup>t</sup>, and Daniel himself for praying in his house<sup>u</sup>, though they confessed they had nothing else against him. To call God's truth by the name of heresy, and heresy by the name of truth. To charge all with schism that dare not subject their

<sup>t</sup> Dan. iii.<sup>u</sup> Dan. vi.



souls to the usurpation and arrogant impositions of the sons of pride, that have neither authority nor ability to govern us, as the Papists deal by the greatest part of the Christian world. To lay snares for men's consciences, and then accuse them for falling into those snares. To make new articles of faith, till they have transcended the capacity of divine and rational belief, and then condemn us for not believing them. To make laws for the church, unnecessary in their own opinion, and sinful in other men's, and command things which they know that others think the Lord forbids, and then load them with the sufferings and reproaches of the disobedient, turbulent, heretical, schismatical, or seditious. To call men factious, if they will not be of their faction. And sectaries, if they will not unreasonably subject their souls to them, and join with an imperious sect against the catholic unity and simplicity. All which the Romanists practise upon the church of Christ. How easy, but how unreasonable, and yet how irresistible is all this. How easy is it to call a meeting of sober Christians, for prayer and mutual edification, such as that was, Acts xii. 12. by the name of a factious, schismatical conventicle; and a meeting of drunkards, or gamesters, by a more gentle, less disgraceful name. To say a man becomes a preacher, when he modestly reproveth another for his sins, or charitably exhorteth him in order to his salvation, or giveth any necessary plain instruction to his family, for whom he must give account. Believe it, it will be a poor excuse to any man, that becomes an enemy to the diligence of a saint, that he could thus cloak his malice, and clothe a saint with the visor of an hypocrite, and the rags of any odious sect.

If the Pharisees were to be believed, it was not they, but Christ that was the hypocrite; nor was it the Son of God, but an enemy to Cæsar, and a blasphemer, that they put to death. But will not Christ know his sheep though he find them torn in a wolf's skin? You say it is turbulent precisians that you strike; but what if Christ find but one of the least of his brethren bleeding by it? It is but hypocrites or schismatics that you reproach; but if Christ find a humble, serious Christian suffering by your abuse, and you to answer it, I would not be in your coats for all the greatness and honour that you shall have before your ever-

lasting shame. If Tertullus accuse a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition, and Christ find a holy, laborious apostle in bonds and suffering by it, it is not his names that will excuse him, and make an apostle, or persecution to be another thing.

To return to the endangered flocks: Look upwards, sirs, and think whether heaven be worth your labour! Look downwards, and think whether earth be more worthy of it! Lay up your treasures where you must dwell for ever. If that be here, then scrape, and flatter, and get all that you can. But if it be not here, but in another life, then hearken to your Lord, and lay up for yourselves a treasure in heaven, and there let your hearts be set<sup>x</sup>. And upon the peril of everlasting misery, hearken not to any man that will tempt you from a diligent, holy life. It is a serious business, deal seriously in it; and be not laughed or mocked out of heaven, by the flouts of a distracted, sensual atheist. If any of them will pretend sobriety and wisdom, and undertake to prove that God should not be loved and served, and your salvation sought with all your might, and with greater care and diligence than any earthly thing, procure me a sober conference with that man, and try whether I prove him to be a befooled servant of the devil, and a mischievous enemy of your salvation and his own. O that we might have but sober debates, instead of jeers, and scorns, and railing, with this sort of men! How quickly should we shew you that they must renounce the Scripture, and renounce Christianity, and (if that be nothing with them) that they must renounce God, and renounce right reason, and unman themselves, if they will renounce a holy, heavenly life, and blame them that make it their principal business in the world to prepare for the world to come.

But if they will not be entreated to such a sober conference, will you that hear them (if you care what becomes of you) but come to us, and hear what we can say for a holy life, before you hearken to them; and let your souls have fair play, and shew that you have so much love to yourselves, as not to cast away salvation at the derision of a fool, before you have heard the other side.

If I make not good the strictest law of God Almighty,

<sup>x</sup> Matt. vi. 20, 21.

against the most subtle cavils of any of the instruments of satan, then tell me that infidels or epicures are in the right. Compare their words with the words of God ; consider well but that one text, 2 Pet. iii. 11., and tell me whether it suit with their opinions, " Seeing all these things must be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all manner of holy conversation and godliness ; looking for and hastening to the coming of the day of God !" Did these words but sink into your hearts, the next time you heard any man reproach a holy, heavenly life, it would perhaps make you think of the words of Paul to such another : " O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil ; thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord ?"

And if holiness be evil spoken of by them that never tried it, what wonder ! Christ hath foretold us that it must be so. " Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven ; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you<sup>2</sup>." If ye were of the world, the world would love his own ; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you<sup>a</sup>," &c. " They think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you, who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and dead. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye ; for the Spirit of glory, and of God, resteth upon you. On their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified<sup>b</sup>." Seneca himself oft telleth us, that among the heathens, virtue was a derision, so far is the nature of man degenerated. The question is not what you are called or taken to be, but what you are. ' *Intus teipsum considera, (inquit Sen.) non qualis sis aliis credas ; plerumque boni inepti, et inertes vocantur. Mihi contingat iste derisus. Æquo animo audienda sunt imperitorum convitia, et ad honesta vadendi contemnendus est iste contemptus ;*' that is ' Inwardly consider of thyself and judge not what thou art by the words of others. For the

<sup>2</sup> Acts xiii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. v. 11, 12.

<sup>a</sup> John xv. 19, 20,

<sup>b</sup> 1 Pet. iv. 4, 5. 14.



most part good men are called fools and dullards. Let me be so derided. The reproaches of the ignorant (or unskilful) must be patiently heard, and this contempt of one that followeth virtue, must be contemned.' Yea, it is the highest honour to be content to be counted bad, that we may not be so; and the greatest trial whether we be indeed sincere, to be put to it, to be either accounted hypocrites, or to be such. Methinks I can scarce too oft recite that excellent saying of Seneca, Epist. 72. '*Nemo plus videtur æstimare virtutem, nemo magis illi esse devotus, quam qui boni viri famam perdidit ne conscientiam perderet:*' 'No man seems to set a higher price on virtue; no man seems to be more devoted to it, than he that hath lost the reputation of being a good man, lest he should lose his conscience.'

But perhaps you will ask, 'May not a man be righteous overmuch?' as is intimated, Eccles. vii. 17.

I answer, it is making a man's self over wise or righteous, that is there reprov'd. And no doubt but, 1. Many take on them, or make themselves more wise and righteous than they are; that is, are hypocrites. 2. As righteousness is taken materially and in common estimation, so a man may be too righteous. He may be too rigorous; which is called justice; and too much in grief, or fear, or trouble: and too much in any outward act that goeth under the name of duty. But it is not then truly and formally duty and righteousness, but sin. As to fast to the disabling the body for God's service. To pray when we should hear. To hear when we should be about some greater work of mercy or necessity. To neglect our outward labour and calling on pretence of religion. To set up sacrifice against or before mercy. To sorrow when we should rejoice. To meditate, and fear, and grieve, beyond what the brain can bear, till it distract us. This is called, being righteous overmuch. As also to make us a religion of our own inventions, and to overdo with will-worship, and the traditions of men, as the Pharisees and Papists. But indeed this is not righteousness, but sin. To be formally overmuch righteous, is a contradiction and impossible. For to go beyond the rule is unrighteousness. And to do too much, is to go beyond the rule. Unless you dare imagine, that God hath erred, and the rule itself is over strict, and the law is unrighteous. But then how shall

God judge the world<sup>c</sup>?" saith the apostle. "Shall not the Judge of all the world do righteously<sup>d</sup>." Nay, how then should he be God?

And is there any thing now left but ignorance or wickedness to stand up against thy speedy diligence? Away then with thy delays and slothfulness: if thou wilt serve God with all thy might, let it be seen. If thou wilt be a Christian indeed, let deeds declare it. Christianity is not a dead opinion. If really thou live in hope of heaven, such hopes will make thee stir for the attainment. Why standest thou idle, when thou art born for work, and all thy faculties are given thee for work, and thou art redeemed for work? (for evangelical work.) If thou be sanctified, thou hast the Spirit of Christ, a quickening, working principle within thee; which way canst thou look, that thou mayst see that which would shame a slothful soul, and fire a cold and frozen heart, and call thee up to a speedy industry? What quickening words shalt thou find in Scripture, if thou wilt but bring thy heart thither, as one that is willing to be quickened? What powerful commands, what promises, what threatenings, what holy examples of exceeding diligence of Christ and his apostles! See how the godly about thee are at work, though the world oppose them and deride them! How earnestly they pray! how carefully they walk! how sadly they complain that they are no better! And hast thou not an immortal soul to save or lose as well as they? See what a stir the proud, ambitious person makes for less than nothing! what a stir the covetous and the voluptuous make for a sweetened draught of mortal poison! And shall we be idle that are engaged for heaven? Is it reason that we should do less for God and our salvation, than they do for sinful pleasure to damnation? You cannot mock them out of their pride or covetousness: and shall they mock thee out of thy religion, and thy hopes of heaven? All the commands, and promises, and threatenings of God, the most powerful preaching, that, as it were, sets open heaven and hell to them, doth not prevail with fleshly men, to leave the most sordid and unmanly sin: and shall the words or frowns of creeping dust prevail with thee against the work for which thou livest in the world, when thou hast still

<sup>c</sup> Rom. iii. 6.

<sup>d</sup> Gen. xviii. 25.

at hand unanswerable arguments from God, from thyself, from heaven and hell, to put thee on? Were it but for thy life, or the life of thy children, friend, yea, or enemy; or for the quenching of a fire in thy house, or in the town, wouldst thou not stir and do thy best? And wilt thou be idle when eternal life lies on it? Let satan bawl against thee by his instruments: let senseless sinners talk awhile of they know not what, till God hath made them change their note: let what will be the consequent to thy flesh: these are not matters for a man much to observe, that is engaged for an endless life. O what are these to the things that thou art called to prosecute! Hold on then, Christians, in the work that you have begun. Do it prudently, and do it universally. Take it together, both works of piety, justice, and charity; but do it now without delay, and do it seriously with your might. I know not what cloud of darkness hath seized on those men's minds that speak against this, or what deadly damp hath seized on their hearts that hath so benumbed and unmanned them. For my own part, though I have long lived in a sense of the preciousness of time, and have not been wholly idle in the world; yet when I have the deepest thoughts of the great, everlasting consequents of my work, and of the uncertainty and shortness of my time, I am even amazed to think that my heart can be so slow and senseless, as to do no more in such a case. The Lord knows, and my accusing, wounded conscience knows, than my slothfulness is so much my shame and admiration, that I am astonished to think that my resolutions are no stronger, my affections no livelier, and my labour and diligence no greater, when God is the commander, and his love the encourager, and his wrath the spur, and heaven or hell must be the issue. O what lives should all of us live, that have things of such unspeakable consequence on our hands, if our hearts were not almost dead within us? Let who will speak against such a life, it will be my daily grief and moan, that I am so dull, and do so little. I know that our works do not profit the Almighty, nor bear any proportion with his reward; nor can they stand in his sight, but as accepted in the Lord our righteousness, and perfumed by the odour of his merits. But I know they are necessary, and they are sweet. Without the holy employment of our faculties, this life will be



but a burden or a dream, and the next an inexpressible misery. O, therefore, that I had more of the love of God, that my soul could get but nearer to him, and more swiftly move upward by faith and love ! O that I had more of that holy life, and active diligence, which the serpentine, Cainish nature doth abhor, though I had with it the scorns of all about me, and though they made me, as they once did better men, as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things<sup>e</sup> ! O that I had more of this derided diligence, and holy converse with the Lord, though my name were cast out as an evil doer<sup>f</sup> : and I were spit at and buffeted by those that do now but secretly reproach ! Might I nearly follow Christ in holiness, why should I grudge to bear his cross, and to be used as he was used<sup>g</sup> ? knowing that “if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him ; and the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us<sup>h</sup>.”

If when we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants, and must say we have done but our duty<sup>i</sup>, have we not all more need of monitors to humble us for doing so much less than our duty, than to be reprehended for being too diligent and exact ?

I again protest, that it is not any works of supererogation, or human invention, superstition, or self-appointment that I am defending, but only the accurate obeying of the laws of God, and the utmost diligence in such obedience, for the obtaining of everlasting life. Either God hath commanded these works of holiness, justice, and charity, or not. If he have not, then I have done, and yield the cause : it is only what he hath commanded that I plead for. O that before you either speak against any holy duty, or yourselves neglect it, you would but come to us, and soberly join in searching the Holy Scriptures, to see whether it be required there or not ; and resolve but to obey it, if we prove it thence : and if it be but a matter of human imposition, we leave you to yourselves, and should desire that you may be much left to yourselves in such things ; and that you place not too much of your religion therein. But if indeed it be commanded in the word of God, I beseech you, as you are

<sup>e</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 13.

<sup>f</sup> Luke vi. 22.

<sup>g</sup> Matt. xxvi. 27. Luke xviii. 32.

<sup>h</sup> Rom. viii. 17, 18.

<sup>i</sup> Luke xvii. 10.

Christians, and as you are men, remember that whenever you blame or scorn a holy duty, it is God himself that you blame or scorn. If it be naught, it is long of him that did command it: the subject must obey. Should not such worms as we obey the infinite God that made us? If it be a fault to obey, it is a duty to rebel, or disobey; and that must be because that God hath no authority to command, and that must be because he is not God. See whither you bring your opposition to a holy life. And dare you stand to this? Dare you as openly mock God for making these strict and holy laws, as you do men for obeying them? None but a professed atheist dare.

Alas, sirs, it is nothing but intoxicating prosperity, and sensual delights, and worldly diversions, that turn your brains, and leave you not the sober use of reason, that makes you think well of ungodly slothfulness, and makes you think so contemptuously or senselessly of a heavenly life. I tell you (and remember another day that you were told of it), that there is not the boldest infidel in the world, nor the bitterest enemy to holiness in this assembly, but shortly would wish they had rather been saints in rags, with all the scorn and cruelty that malice can inflict on such, than to have braved it out in pride and gallantry, with the neglect of the great, everlasting things. I tell you again, there is not an ungodly wretch that heareth me, but ere long would give a world if he were owner of a holy heart and life, that he had spent his days in holy, watchful preparations for his change, which he spent for that which will deceive him and forsake him.

Methinks I even see how you will passionately rage against yourselves, and tear your hearts with self-revenge (if grace prevent it not by a more safe repentance), when you think too late how you lived on earth, and what golden times of grace you lost, and vilified all that would not lose them as foolishly as you. If repentance unto life made Paul so call himself foolish, disobedient, deceived, and exceeding mad<sup>k</sup>, you may imagine how tormenting repentance will make you call yourselves too late.

O sirs, you cannot now conceive, while you sit here in health, and ease, and honour, what different thoughts will

<sup>k</sup> Tit. iii. 3. Acts xxvi. 11.

then possess you of a holy and unholy life ! How mad you will think them that had but one life's time of preparation for eternal life, and desperately neglected it : and how sensible you will then be of the wisdom of believers, that knew their time, and used it while they had it. Now " wisdom is justified of all her children ;" but then how sensibly will it be justified of all its enemies ! O with what gripes will undone souls look back on a life of mercy and opportunities, thus basely undervalued, and slept away in dreaming idleness, and fooled away for things of naught.

The language of that damned rich man, Luke xvi. may help you in your predictions. O how will you wonder at yourselves that ever you could be so blind and senseless as to be no more affected with the warnings of the Lord, and with the forethoughts of everlasting joy or misery ! To have but one small part of time to do all that ever must be done by you for eternity, and say all that ever you must say for your own or others' souls, and that this was spent in worse than nothing ! To have but one uncertain life, in which you must run the race that wins or loseth heaven for ever ; and that you should be tempted by a thing of naught, to lose that one irrecoverable opportunity, or to sit still or run another way, when you should have been making haste with all your might ! O sirs, the thoughts of this will be other kind of thoughts another day, than now you feel them ; you cannot now think how the thoughts of this will then affect you ! That you had a time in which you might have prayed, with promise of acceptance, and had no hearts to take that time ! That Christ was offered you as well as he was offered them that entertained him ; that you were called on and warned as well as they, but obstinately despised and neglected all ! That life and death were set before you, and the everlasting joys were offered to your choice, against the charms of sinful pleasures, and you might have freely had them if you would, and were told that holiness was the only way, and that it must be *now or never*, and yet that you chose your own destruction ! These thoughts will be part of hell to the ungodly. They will wonder that reason could be so unreasonable ; and they that had the common wit of man in other matters should be so far beside themselves in that which is the only thing that it is commendable to be



wise for, that such sottish reasonings should prevail with them against the clearest light, and nothing should be preferred before all things, and arguments fetched from chaff and dung, should conquer those that were fetched from heaven ! O what heart-rending thoughts will these be, when eternity shall afford them leisure for an impartial review ! Yea, that they should deceive others also with such a gross deceit, and scorn at all that would not be as mad as they ; that being drunken with the world's delusion, they should abuse all that were truly sober ; that the one thing needful, should seem to them a needless thing ; that their tongues should plead for these delusions of their wicked hearts, and they should be enemies to those that would not be enemies to God, and to themselves, and cast away their time and souls as they did ! They will wonder with self-indignation, what could bewitch them into so great unreasonableness, below a man, against the light of nature, as well as of supernatural revelation.

Honourable and beloved hearers, I beseech you do not take it ill, that I speak so much of these matters that are so unpleasant and unwelcome to unbelieving, careless, carnal hearts ; it is, that I may prevent all this in time, by the awakenings of true repentance : and O that this might be the success ! That I might hear by your penitent confessions, and see by your universal, speedy reformatiions, that God hath so great mercy for you, and that these persuasions might be the means of so much happiness to you, and comfort unto me ! However, this assembly shall be witnesses that you were warned ; and conscience shall be witness, that if you waste the rest of your days in the pleasures and vanities of this deceitful world, it was not because you could have no better, and were not called to higher things ; that if you yet stand idle, it is not because you could not be hired ; for in the name of Christ I have called you into his vineyard, and told you of his work and wages, and shamed your excuses and objections this day. Come away then speedily from the snares of sinners, and the company of hardened, deceived men, and cast away the works of darkness. Heaven is before you ! Death is at hand ! The eternal God hath sent to call you ! Mercy doth yet stretch forth its arms ! You have staid too long, and abused pa-

tience too much already : stay no longer ! O now please God, and comfort us, and save yourselves by resolving that this shall be the day ; and faithfully performing of this your resolution. Up and be doing : believe, repent, desire, obey, and do all this with all your might. Love him that you must love for ever, and love him with all your soul and might ; seek that which is truly worth a seeking, and will pay for all your cost and pains : and seek it first with all your might ; remembering still it must be *now* or *never*.

Before I conclude, I have two messages yet to deliver to the servants of the Lord : the one is of Encouragement : the other of Direction.

I know that many of you have a three-fold trouble, which requireth a three-fold comfort and encouragement.

One is, that you have done so little of your work ; but lost so much of your time already : another is, that you are so opposed and hindered. And the greatest of all is, that you are yet so dull and slow ; the cure of which must be the matter of my Directions.

1. For the first : That you have lost your time, must be the matter of your humiliation : but that all is not lost, before you see your sin and duty ; but yet the patience and mercy of the Lord are attending you, and continuing your hope ; this is the matter of your comfort and encouragement. Repent, therefore, that you came no sooner home ; but rejoice that you are come home at last ; and now be more diligent in redeeming your time, in remembrance of the time already lost : and though it must be your grief that your master hath been deprived of so much of his service, and others of so much good which you should have done them, and that time is lost that cannot be recalled ; yet it is your comfort, that your own reward may be equal with them that have borne the burden and heat of the day ; for many that are last (in the time of their coming in) shall be first (in receiving the reward). This is the meaning of that parable in Matt. xx. which was spoken to encourage them that had stood out too long, and to rebuke the envy and high expectations of them that came in sooner ; and it is no whit contradictory to those passages in Matt. xxv. which intimate a different degree of glory to be given to them that have different degrees of grace upon their industrious improve-

ment. The one parable, (Matt. xx.) shews that men shall not be rewarded differently for their longer or shorter continuance in the work, but that those that come in late, and yet are found with equal holiness, shall be rewarded equally with the first; and more, if their holiness be more; which the second parable expresseth, declaring God's purpose to give them the greatest glory, that have improved their holiness to the greatest measure. O, therefore, that the sense of your former unkindness might provoke you the more resolvedly to give up yourselves in fervent love, and full obedience: and then you will find that your time is redeemed, though it cannot be recalled; and that mercy hath secured your full reward. O what an unspeakable mercy is this; that if yet you will devote yourselves entirely to Christ, and serve him with your might, the little time that yet remains, he will take it as if you had come in at the first hour of the day!

2. And as for the opposition and hindrances in your way, they are no other than what your Lord foretold. He hath gone before you, and conquered much more than ever you will encounter from without, (though he had not a body of sin to conquer; and in that respect the conquest of his Spirit in his members, hath the preeminence of his personal conquest). He hath bid you be of good cheer, because he hath overcome the world. If you will not take up your cross and follow him, you cannot be his disciples<sup>1</sup>. Would you be soldiers on condition you may not fight, or fight and yet have no opposition? Follow the captain of your salvation; if mocking, or buffeting, or spitting in his face, or hanging him upon a cross, or piercing his side, would have made him give up the work of your redemption, you had been left to utter desperation. The opposition that is conquerable, should serve but to excite your courage and resolution in a case of such necessity, where you must prevail or perish. Have you God himself on your side, and Christ your Captain, and the Spirit of Christ to give you courage, and the promise to invite you, and heaven before you, hell behind you, and the examples of such an army of conquering believers; and shall the scorns or threats of a crawling worm prevail against all these for your discouragement? You are

<sup>1</sup> John xvi. 33. Luke xv. 27. 33.



not afraid lest any man should pull down the sun, or dry up the sea, or overturn the earth ; and are you afraid that man should conquer God<sup>m</sup>? or take you out of the hands of Christ<sup>n</sup>? Mark how they used David ; “ Every day they wrest my words ; all their thoughts are against me for evil. They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul.” But what, did he therefore fear, or fly from God ? No ; “ What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. In God will I praise his word ; in God have I put my trust ; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me<sup>o</sup>.” “ Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law ; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings : for the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool : but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation<sup>p</sup>.” You deserve to be shut out of heaven, if you will not bear the breath of a fool’s derision for it.

3. But (saith the self-accusing soul) ‘ I am convinced that I ought to be laborious for my salvation, and that all this is too little that I can do ; but I am dull, and cold, and negligent in all : I am far from doing it with my might : I hear, and read, and pray as if I did it not, and as if I were half asleep, or my heart were away upon somewhat else. I fear I am but a lazy hypocrite.’

*Answ.* I shall first speak to thy doubt, and then to direct thee against thy sin.

And first, you must be resolved whether your sloth be such as is predominant, or mortified ; such as proveth that you are dead in sin ; or only such as proveth you but diseased and infirm.

And to know this, you must distinguish, 1. Between the dulness and coldness of the affections, and the unresolvedness and disobedience of the soul. 2. Between a slothfulness that keepeth men from a godly life in a life of wickedness ; and that which only keepeth them from some particular act of duty, or abateth the degree of their sincere affection and obedience. 3. Between that sloth that is the vicious habit of the will, and that which is the effect of age, or sickness, or melancholy, or other distemper of the body.

<sup>m</sup> Rom. viii. 37.

<sup>n</sup> John x. 28, 29.

<sup>o</sup> Psal. lvi. 3—6.

<sup>p</sup> Isa. li. 7, 8.

And so the case lieth plain before you. 1. If it be not only your affections that are dull, but your will through sloth is unresolved; and this not only in a temptation to the abatement of some degrees, and the neglect of some particular duty, but against a holy life, and against the forsaking of your reigning sin; and this be not only through some bodily distemper, disabling your reason, but from this vicious habit of your wills; then is your sloth a mortal sign, and proves you in a graceless state; but if the sloth which you complain of be only dulness of your affections, and the backwardness of your wills to some high degrees, or particular duties, and the effect of some bodily distemper, or the weakness of your spiritual life, while your wills are habitually resolved for God and a holy life, against a worldly, fleshly life: this is your infirmity, and a sin to be lamented, but not a mark of death and gracelessness.

You will have a backward, slothful heart to strive with while you live; but bless God that you are offended with it, and would fain be delivered from it. This was Paul's evidence, Rom. vii. 24. You will have flesh, and flesh will plead for its interest, and will be striving against the Spirit; but bless God that you have also the Spirit to strive against the flesh. Be thankful that you have life to feel your sickness, though you languish under it, and cannot work as healthful men; and that you are in the way to heaven, though you go not so fast as you should and would.

2. But yet though you have life, it is so grievous to be diseased and languish under such an infirmity as sloth, that I advise you to stir up yourselves to the utmost, and give not way to a lazy temper; and that you may serve the Lord with all your might, I recommend these few Directions to your observation.

*Direct.* 1. When you would be quickened up to seriousness and diligence, have ready at hand such quickening considerations as are here before propounded to you; and set them before you, and labour to work them upon your hearts. Powerful truths would have some power upon your souls, if you will but soberly apply your reason to them, and plead them with yourselves, as you would do with another in any of your reproofs or exhortations.

*Direct.* 2. Take heed lest any worldly design or interest, or any lusts or sensual delight, divert your minds from God and duty.' For all the powers of your soul will languish, when you should set them on work on spiritual things, and your hearts will be abroad, when you should be wholly taken up with God, if once they be entangled with worldly things. Watch therefore over them in your callings, lest the creature steal too deep into your affections: for if you be alive to the world, you will be in that measure dead to God.

*Direct.* 3. 'If it be possible, live under a lively ministry, that when your hearts go cold and dull unto the assemblies, they may come warm and quickened home.' Life cherisheth life as fire kindleth fire. The word and ordinances of God "are quick, powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart<sup>r</sup>;" and therefore it may do much to make you feel. Many a thousand hath it pricked at the heart, and sent them home alive, that before were dead<sup>s</sup>. Much more may you expect, that it should excite the principle which you have already.

*Direct.* 4. 'If it may be, converse with lively, active, stirring Christians:' but especially have one such for a bosom friend, that will warm you when you are cold, and help to awake you when you drop asleep, and will not comply with you in a declining, lazy and unprofitable course. "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labour: for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat; but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken<sup>t</sup>."

*Direct.* 5. 'Put not away from you the day of death. Look not for long life.' It is the life to come that must be the life of all your duties here, and distant things do lose their force. Set death, and judgment, and eternal life continually as near at hand: live in a watchful expectation of your change: do all as dying men, and as passing to receive the recompence of endless joy or woe, and this will quicken

<sup>r</sup> Heb. iv. 12.<sup>s</sup> Acts ii. 37.<sup>t</sup> Eccles. iv. 9—12.



you. To this end, go often to the house of mourning, and be not unseasonably or immoderately in the house of mirth. When you observe what is the end of all men, the heart will be made better by it<sup>u</sup>. But excess of carnal mirth doth infatuate men, and destroy their wisdom, seriousness and sobriety. Keep always a sense of the brevity of life, and of the preciousness of time, and remember that it is posting on whether you work or play. Methinks if you forget any of the rest, this one consideration that we have in hand, should make you bestir you with your might, that it must be *now* or *never*.

I shall only add two needful cautions, lest while we cure one disease, we cause another, (as knowing that corrupted nature is used to run from extreme into extreme).

1. Desire and labour more for an high estimation of things spiritual and eternal, and a fixed resolution, and an even and diligent endeavour, than for passionate feelings and affections. For these latter are more inconstant in the best, and depend much on the temper of the body, and are not of so great necessity as the former, though excellent in a just degree and season. (For it is possible that passion even about good things may be too much; when estimation, resolution, and regular endeavours cannot.)

2. Be suspicious when you have the warmest and liveliest affections, lest your judgments should be perverted by following, when they should lead. It is very common for zeal and strong affections, even to that which is good, to occasion the mistakes of the understanding, and make men look all on one side, and think they can never go far enough from some particular sins, till ignorantly they are carried into some perhaps as great on the other hand. Be warned by the sad experience of these times to suspect your judgments in the fervour of your affections.

And observing these cautions, let nothing abate your zeal and diligence; but whatever duty is set before you, do it with your might; for it must be *now* or *never*.

Though I know that the enmity to a holy, heavenly life is so radicated in corrupted nature, that all that I have said is necessary and too little; yet some I know will think it strange that I should intimate that any that preach the Gos-

<sup>u</sup> Eccles. vii. 2—5.

pel are guilty of any measure of this sin, and will think that I intend by it to reflect upon some parties above the rest. But again I profess, that it is no party but the devil's party, and the ungodly party that I mean. And it is hard if you will not believe me concerning my own sense. Nor is it my desire that any of the odiousness of schism, sedition, rebellion, or disobedience to authority, should be so much as diminished by any man's profession of godliness. No, I beseech you, by how much the more godly you are, by so much the more you will detest all these; godliness tendeth to shame and condemn these odious sins, and not to be a cloak for them or any extenuation; nay, what can more aggravate them, than that they should be found in the professors of godliness? I again profess that I have no design but to plead for serious diligence in the religion which we are all agreed in, and to stop the mouths of those that wickedly speak against it.

But, alas, it is too evident that I have too many to speak to, that are not innocent; why else doth Scripture tell us that such there will be still to the end of the world? and that there are some that preach Christ of strife and envy, to add affliction to the bonds of the afflicted? and how came holy Mr. Bolton to find so much work for these rebukes so lately in his time, as in his books you find? And can we already forget what abundance of Antinomian teachers were among us, that turned out the very doctrine of practical diligence, and cried it down as a setting up ourselves and our own works, and as injurious to free grace, and under pretence of exalting Christ, did set up a heartless, lifeless doctrine, that tended to turn out the life of Christianity, and take men off their necessary diligence, as a legal, dangerous thing?

And what ordinance of God hath not been cast out by preachers themselves upon religious pretences, family-duties, catechising, singing of psalms, baptism, the Lord's supper, and which not? And if all these were down, wherein should the practice of religion consist? And what abundance of pamphlets had we that laboured to make the orthodox, faithful ministry a very scorn, and deride them for their faithful service of God, and their faithfulness to their superiors in opposition to their unrighteous ways? I am loath to blot my papers and trouble your ears with the names of the Mar-

tin-mar-priests, and a multitude of such others, which I mean.

And let no Papist, or any enemy of our church, reproach us because such enemies to holiness are found among us. Can it be expected that our church should be better than the family of Adam, that had a Cain? Or of Noah, that had a Ham? Or of Christ, that had a Judas? And are there not far more enemies to serious godliness among the Papists themselves, than among us? One instance out of the life of Philip Neri, the father of the Oratorians, I will put into the preface, because it is too long to be here inserted. There is no place, no rank of men in the world, where some of the enemies of a holy life are not to be found, even among those that profess the same religion in doctrinals, with those whom they oppose. Christ and the devil have their several armies; and if once the devil disband his soldiers, and have none to oppose a holy life, then tell me that it is a needless thing to defend it and to confute them. But I am listed under Christ, and will never give overpleading for him, till his adversaries give over pleading against him, and his cause, as long as he continueth my liberty and duty. And blessed be the Lord that if an hypocritical preacher be found among us, that secretly or openly disgraceth a diligent, holy life, there are more able, holy, faithful ones to confute him both by doctrine and by their lives, than are to be found in any other kingdom in the world proportionably, that ever I could hear of. And that the faithful disciples are so many and the Judases so few, how great a blessing is it to this land, and how great an honour to his majesty's government, and to the church in his dominions! The Lord teach this sinful nation to be thankful, and pardon their ingratitude, and never deprive them of this forfeited mercy. The Lord teach them to hearken to the friends, and not to the enemies, of holiness, and never to receive a wound at the heart of religion, however they hear their smaller differences about things circumstantial.

And now I should conclude, I am loath to end, for fear lest I have not yet prevailed with you. What are you now resolved to do, from this day forward? It is work that we have been speaking of, and necessary work of endless consequence, which must be done, and quickly done, and thoroughly done. Are you not convinced that it is so? that



ploughing and sowing are not more necessary to your harvest, than the work of holiness in this day of grace is necessary to your salvation? You are blind if you see not this; you are dead if you feel it not; what then will you do? For God's sake, and for your own sake, stand not demurring till time be gone. It is all that the devil desireth, if he can but find you one thing or other to be thinking, and talking, and doing about, to keep you from this till time be gone; and then he that kept you from seeing and feeling, will help you to see and to feel your calamity; then the devil will make you feel that which preachers could not make you feel; and he will make you think of that, and lay it close enough to your hearts, which we could not get you to lay to heart. Now we study and preach to you in hope; but then (alas, it breaks our hearts to think of it) we have done with you for ever, because all hope is gone. Then the devil may challenge a minister, 'Now do thy worst to bring this sinner to repentance: now call to him to consider, and believe, and come to Christ: now offer him mercy, and entreat him to accept it: now cry to him to take heed of sin and of temptations, that he come not to this place of torments: now tell him of the beauty or necessity of holiness, and call upon him to turn and live: now do thy worst to rescue him from my power, and save his soul.' Alas, poor sinners! will you stop your ears, and go on in sin, and damn yourselves, and break our hearts to foresee that day! Must we see the devil go away with such a prey, and shall we not rescue your captivated souls, because you will not hear, you will not stir, you will not consent! O hear the God of heaven, if you will not hear us, who calleth to you, Return and Live! O hear him that shed his blood for souls, and tendereth you now salvation by his blood! O hear without any more delay, before all is gone, and you are gone, and he that now deceiveth you, torment you! Yet hold on a little longer in a carnal, earthly, unsanctified state, and it is too late to hope, or pray, or strive for your salvation: yet a little longer and mercy will have done with you for ever; and Christ will never invite you more, nor ever offer to cleanse you by his blood, or sanctify you by his Spirit! Yet a little longer, and you shall never hear a sermon more, and never more be troubled with those preachers that were in good sadness

with you, and longed once for your conversion and salvation! O sleepy, dead-hearted sinners, what should I do to shew you how near you stand to eternity, and what is now doing in the world that you are going to, and how these things are thought on there! What should I do to make you know how time is valued, how sin and holiness are esteemed in the world where you must live for ever! What should I do to make you know those things to-day, which I will not thank you to know when you are gone hence! O that the Lord would open your eyes in time! Could I but make you know these things as believers should know them, I say not, as those that see them, nor yet as dreamers that do not regard them, but as those that believe that they must shortly see them; what a joyful hour's work should I esteem this! How happy would it be to you and me, if every word were accompanied with tears! If I followed you home and begged your consideration on my bare knees, or as a beggar begs an alms at your doors: if this sermon cost me as many censures or slanders as ever sermon did, I should not think it too dear, if I could but help you to a sight of the things we speak of, that you might truly understand them as they are; and that you had but a true, awakened apprehension of the shortness of your day, of the nearness of eternity, and of the endless consequence of your present work, and what holy labour and sinful loitering will be thought of in the world to come for ever! But when we see you sin, and trifle, and no more regard your endless life, and see also what haste your time is making, and yet cannot make you understand these things; when we know ourselves as sure as we speak to you, that you will shortly be astonished at the review of your present sloth and folly, and when we know that these matters are not thought of in another world, as they are among the sleepy or the Bedlam sinners here, and yet know not how to make you know it, whom it doth so exceeding much concern, this amazeth us, and almost breaks our hearts! Yea, when we tell you of things that are past doubt, and can be no further matter of controversy, that men have sold their understandings, and betrayed their reason to their sordid lusts, and yet we cannot get reasonable men to know that which they cannot choose but know; to know that seriously and practically which al-

ways hath a witness in their breasts, and which none but the profligate dare deny ; I tell you, sinners, this, even this, is worse than a prison to us : it is you that are our persecutors ; it is you that are the daily sorrow of our hearts ; it is you that disappoint us of our hopes, and make us lose so much of the labour of our lives ! And if all others did as some do by us, alas, how sad an employment should we have ; and how little would it trouble us to be silenced and laid aside ! If we were sick of the ambitious or covetous thirst, we should then say that it is they that deny us wealth and honour that disappoint us. But if we are Christians, this is not our case, but it is the thirst after your conversion and salvation that affecteth us : and therefore it is to you, even you that linger in your sins and delay repentance, and forget your home, and neglect your souls ; it is you that disappoint, and you that are our afflictors : and as much as you think you befriend us when you plead our cause against men of violence and rage, it is you that shall answer for the loss of our time, and labour, and hope, and for the grieving of your teachers' hearts.

Sinners, whatever the devil and raging passion may say against a holy life, God and your own consciences shall be your witnesses, that we desired nothing unreasonable, or unnecessary at your hands. I know it is the master-piece of the devil's craft, when he cannot keep all religion in contempt, to raise up a dust of controversy in the world about names, and forms, and circumstances in religion, that he may keep men busily striving about these, while religion itself is neglected or unknown ; and that he may make men believe that they have some religion, because they are for one side or other in these controversies ; and especially that he may entice men to number the substantials of religion itself, among these less doubtful points, and make sinners believe that it is but the precise opinion of one party that they reject, while they reject the serious practice of all true religion. And so the devil gets more by these petty quarrels and controversies, occasioned by contentious, empty men, than he could have done by the open opposition of infidels, heathens, or the profane : so that neither I nor any man, that opinionative men have a mind to quarrel with, can tell how to exhort you to the very practice of Christianity it-



self, but you are presently casting your thoughts upon some points wherein we are reported to differ from you, or remembering some clamours of malicious men, that prejudice against the person of the speaker may keep your souls from profiting to salvation by the doctrine which even yourselves profess.

If this be the case of any one of you, I do not mean your consciences shall escape the power or evidence of the truth. Dost thou talk of our differences about forms and ceremonies? Alas, man, what is that to the message which we come about to thee? What is that to the business that we are preaching of? The question that I am putting to you, is not whether you will be for this form of church-government, or for that, for a ceremony, or against it; but it is, whether you will hearken in time to God and conscience, and be as busy to provide for heaven, as ever you have been to provide for earth? And whether you will set yourselves to do the work that you are created and redeemed for? This is the business that I am sent to call you to: What say you? Will you do it, and do it seriously without delay? You shall not be able to say that I called you to a party, a faction, or some opinion of my own, or laid your salvation upon some doubtful controversy. No, sinner, thy conscience shall have no such shift for its deceit: it is godliness, serious and practical godliness that thou art called to. It is nothing but what all Christians in the world, both Papists, and Greeks, and Protestants, and all the parties among those that are true Christians, are agreed in the profession of. That I may not leave thee in any darkness which I can deliver thee from, I will tell thee distinctly, though succinctly, what it is that thou art thus importuned to; and tell me then, whether it be that which any Christian can make doubt of.

1. That which I entreat of thee, is but to live as one that verily believeth there is a God, and that this God is the Creator, the Lord, and Ruler of the world: and that it is incomparably more of our business to understand and obey his laws, and as faithful subjects to be conformed to them, than to observe or be conformed to the laws of man: and to live as men that do believe that this God is almighty, and the greatest of men are less than crawling worms to him; and that he is infinitely wise, and the wisdom of man is

foolishness to him ; and that he is infinitely good and amiable ; and the best of creatures is dung and filth in comparison of him ; and that his love is the only felicity of man ; and that none are happy but those that do enjoy it ; and none that do enjoy it can be miserable ; and that riches, and honour, and fleshly delights are brutish vanities in comparison of the eternal love of God. Live but as men that heartily believe all this, and I have that I come for. And is any of this matter of controversy or doubt ? Not among Christians I am sure ; not among wise men. It is no doubt to those in heaven, nor to those in hell, nor to those that have not lost their understandings upon earth. Live then according to these truths.

2. Live as men that verily believe that mankind is fallen into sin and misery ; and that all men are corrupted, and under the condemnation of the law of God, till they are delivered, pardoned, reconciled to God, and made new creatures by a renewing, restoring, sanctifying change. Live but as men that believe that this cure must be wrought, and this great restoring change must be made upon ourselves, if it be not done already. Live as men that have so great a work to look after. And is this a matter of any doubt or controversy ? Sure it is not to a Christian : and methinks it should not be to any man else that knoweth himself, any more than to a man in a dropsy, whether he be diseased, when he feels the thirst and sees the swelling. Did you but know what cures and changes are necessarily to be made upon your diseased, miserable souls, if you care what becomes of them, you would soon see cause to look about you.

3. Live but as men that verily believe that you are redeemed by the Son of God, who hath suffered for your sin, and brought you the tidings of pardon and salvation, which you may have if you will give up yourselves to him who is the physician of souls, to be healed by him. Live as men that believe that the infinite love of God revealed to lost mankind in the Redeemer, doth bind us to love him with all our hearts, and serve him with all our restored faculties, and to work as those that have the greatest thankfulness to shew, as well as the greatest mercies to receive, and misery to escape ; and as those that believe that if sinners that without Christ had no hope, shall now love their sins and refuse to

leave them, and to repent and be converted, and unthankfully reject the mercy of salvation so dearly bought, and so freely offered them, their damnation will be doubled as their sin is doubled. Live but as men that have such redemption to admire, such mercy to entertain, and such a salvation to attain, and that are sure they can never escape if they continue to neglect so great salvation: and is there any controversy among Christians in any of this? There is not certainly.

4. Live but as men that believe that the Holy Ghost is given by Jesus Christ to convert, to quicken, to sanctify all that he will save; and that except you be born again of the Spirit, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven; and that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, the same is none of his<sup>x</sup>: and that without this no patching or mending of your lives by any common principles will serve the turn for your salvation, or make you acceptable to God<sup>y</sup>. Live as men that believe that this Spirit is given by the hearing of the word of God, and must be prayed for, and obeyed, and not resisted, quenched, and grieved. And is there any controversy among Christians in any of this? Ask those that make a mock at holiness, sanctification and the Spirit, whether they be not baptized into the name of the Holy Ghost, and profess to believe in him as their Sanctifier, as well as in the Son their Redeemer? And then ask them whether it be not a thing that should make even a devil to tremble to come so near the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, as to mock at his office and sanctifying work, and at the holiness without which no man shall see the Lord<sup>z</sup>: and this after they are baptized and profess to believe in the Holy Ghost as their Sanctifier.

5. Live but as men that believe that sin is the greatest evil, the thing which the Holy God abhorreth. And then you will never make a mock of it, as Solomon saith the foolish do<sup>a</sup>; nor say, 'What harm is in it?'

6. Live but as men that believe no sin is pardoned without repentance; and that repentance is the loathing and forsaking of sin; and that if it be true, it will not suffer you to live wilfully in any gross sin, nor to desire to keep the least infirmity, nor to be loath to know your unknown sins.

7. Live as those that believe that you are to be members

<sup>x</sup> John iii. 5, 6. Rom. viii. 9.    <sup>y</sup> Heb. xi. 6.    <sup>z</sup> Heb. xii. 14.    <sup>a</sup> Prov. xiv. 9.



of the holy catholic church, and therein to hold the communion of saints. And then you will know that it is not as a member of any sect or party, but as a holy member of this holy church, that you must be saved ; and that it is the name of a Christian which is more honourable than the name of any division or subdivision among Christians, whether Greek, or Papist, or Protestant, or Prelatist, or Presbyterian, or Independent, or Anabaptist. It is easy to be of any one of these parties ; but to be a Christian, which all pretend to, is not so easy. It is easy to have a burning zeal for any divided party or cause ; but the zeal for the Christian religion is not so easy to be kindled or kept alive ; but requireth as much diligence to maintain it, as dividing zeal requireth to quench it. It is easy to love a party as a party : but to keep up catholic charity to all Christians, and to live in that holy love and converse which is requisite to a communion of saints is not so easy. Satan and corrupted nature befriend the love and zeal of faction, which is confined to a party on a controverted cause ; but they are enemies to the love of saints, and to the zeal for holiness, and to the catholic charity which is from the Spirit of Christ. You see I call you not to division, not to side with sects ; but to live as members of a holy catholic church, which consisteth of all that are holy in the world ; and to live as those that believe the communion of saints.

8. Live as those that believe that there is a life everlasting, where the sanctified shall live in endless joy, and the unsanctified in endless punishment and woe. Live but as men that verily believe a heaven and a hell, and a day of judgment, in which all the actions of this life must be revised, and all men judged to their endless state. Believe these things heartily, and then think a holy diligence needless if you can. Then be of the mind of the deriders and enemies of godliness if you can. If one sight of heaven or hell would serve without any more ado, instead of other arguments, to confute all the cavils of the distracted world ; and to justify the most diligent saints in the judgment of those that now abhor them, why should not a sound belief of the same thing in its measure do the same ?

9. Live but as those that believe this life is given us as the only time to make preparation for eternal life ; and that

all that ever shall be done for your salvation, must be now, just now, before your time is ended. Live as those that know (and need not faith to tell them) that this time is short, and almost at an end already, and stayeth for no man, but as a post doth haste away. It will not stay while you are trimming you, or sporting you. It will not stay while you are taking up in stage plays, in compliments, in idle visits, or any impertinent, needless things. It will not tarry while you spend yet the other year, or month, or day, in your worldliness, or ambition, or in your lusts or sensual delights, and put off your repentance to another time. O, sirs, for the Lord's sake, do but live as men that must shortly be buried in the grave, and their souls appear before the Lord, and as men that have but this little time, to do all for their everlasting life, that ever must be done. O live as men that are sure to die, and are not sure to live till to-morrow. And let not the noise of pleasure or worldly business, or the chat or scorns of miserable fools, bear down your reason, and make you live as if you knew not what you know, or as if there were any doubt about these things. Who is the man, and what is his name, that dare contradict them, and can make it good? O do not sin against your knowledge. Do not stand still and see your glass running, and time making such haste, and yet make no more haste yourselves, than if you were not concerned in it. Do not, O do not slumber, when time and judgment never slumber, nor sit still when you have so much to do, and know all that is now left undone must be undone for ever! Alas! sirs, how many questions of exceeding weight have you yet to be resolved in? Whether you are truly sanctified? whether your sins be pardoned? whether you shall be saved when you die? whether you are ready to leave this world, and enter upon another? I tell you, the answering of these and many more such questions, is a matter of no small difficulty or concernment. And all these must be done in this little and uncertain time. It must be *now* or *never*. Live but as men that believe and consider these certain unquestionable things.

10. Lastly. Will you but live as men that believe that the world and the flesh are the deadly enemies of your salvation. And that believe, that if any man love the world, (so far)

the love of the Father is not in him<sup>b</sup>. And as men that believe, that, if ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if by the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live<sup>c</sup>. And those that are in Christ Jesus, and are freed from condemnation, are such as walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. And that we must make no provision for the flesh to satisfy the will or lusts thereof, and must not walk in gluttony and drunkenness, in chambering and wantonness, in strife and envying; but must have our hearts where our treasure is<sup>d</sup>, and converse in heaven<sup>e</sup>, and being risen with Christ, must seek the things that are above, and set our affections on them, and not on the things that are on earth<sup>f</sup>.

Sirs, will you say that any of this is our singular opinion, or matter of controversy and doubt? Are not all Christians agreed in it? Do you not, your ownelves profess that you believe it? Live then but as those that do believe it, and condemn not yourselves in the things that you confess.

I tell thee, if now thou wilt refuse to live according to these common acknowledged truths, thou shalt never be able to say before the Lord, that men's controversy about a ceremony, or church-government, or the manner of worship, were the things that hindered thee. But all sorts and sects shall be witnesses against thee, and condemn thee: for they all agreed in these things; even the bloodiest sect, that imprison, torment, and kill others for their differences in smaller matters, are yet agreed with those that they persecute and murder, about these things. Papists are agreed in them, and Protestants are agreed in them. All the sects that are now quarrelling among us, and in the world, are agreed in them, who are but meet for the name of Christians. All these will be ready to bear witness against the profane, the sensual, the slothful neglecter of God and his salvation, and to say, we all confessed, notwithstanding our other differences, that all these things were certain truths, and that men's lives should be ordered according unto these.

But if yet you pretend controversy to cover your malignity or ungodliness, I will go a little further, and tell you that in the matter as well as in the principles, it is things

<sup>b</sup> 1 John ii. 15, 16.    <sup>c</sup> Rom. viii. 13.    <sup>d</sup> Rom. viii. 1. xiii. 10, 13.    Matt. vi. 21.

<sup>e</sup> Phil. iii. 18—20.

<sup>f</sup> Col. iii. 1—3.



that we are all agreed in, which I call you to, and which the ungodly do refuse. I will briefly name them.

1. One part of your work which we urge you to do with all your might, is seriously and soberly to consider often of all these truths before mentioned, which you say you do believe. And is it any controversy with reasonable men, whether they should use their reason? or with believers, whether they should consider and lay to heart the weight and use of the things which they believe?

2. Another part of your work is, to love God with all your soul and might; and to make him your delight, and to seek first his kingdom, and the righteousness thereof; and to set your affections on the things above, and to live on earth as the heirs of heaven. And is there any controversy among Protestants, Papists, or any about this?

3. Another part of your work is, to see the honouring of God in the world, the promoting of his kingdom and government in yourselves and others, the doing of his will, and obeying of his laws. And is there any controversy in this?

4. Another part of your work is, to mortify the flesh, and reject its conceits, and desires, and lusts, which resist the aforesaid obedience to God; and to cast out the inordinate love and care of worldly things; to refuse the counsels, the commands, the will, the enticements and persuasions of men, which contradict the commands and will of God; and to forsake all that you have in the world rather than forsake your dear Redeemer, and hazard your salvation by any wilful sin. To take up your cross and follow Christ through a life of suffering to glory. I know there is difficulty enough in all this, and that flesh will repine against it and abhor it. But is there any controversy about it among any true believers? Is not all this the express command of God, and necessary to salvation?

5. Another part of your work is to avoid temptations, and fly from the occasions and appearances of evil; and not only to avoid that which is directly evil itself, but that also which would draw you into evil (as far as you can) and to keep as far as may be from the brink of hell and danger, and to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, nor be companions with them, but reprove them, and mourn

for the unclean and wicked conversation of the world. This is it that we entreat of you ; and is there any matter of controversy in all this ?

6. Another part of the work which we call you to, is, to redeem this little time that is allotted you. To make the best of it, and improve it to the greatest furtherance of your salvation. To lose none of it upon unprofitable things. To spend it in those works which will comfort you most when time is gone. If it will be more comfortable to you in the day of judgment, that you have spent your time in plays, and sports, and idleness, and worldly cares, and pleasures, than in serving God, and preparing for another life, then hold on, and do so to the end. But if it will not, then do what you would hear of, seeing you must hear of it. Spend none of your time in idleness and unfruitful things, till you have no better and more necessary things to spend it in, and till you have time to spare from more important work. This is our request to you, that you would not lose one hour of your precious time, but spend it as those that have lost too much, and have but a little more to spend in preparation for eternity. And is this any schismatical or factious notion ? Is there any thing controvertible, or which any Christian can speak against, in any of this ?

7. Another part of your work is, to search the Scripture as that which containeth your directions for eternal life<sup>f</sup>. To love the word of God more than thousands of gold and silver, and prefer it before your necessary food<sup>g</sup>, and to meditate in it day and night, as that which is your pleasure and delight<sup>h</sup>, and as that which is able to make you wise unto salvation<sup>i</sup>, and to build you up, and give you an inheritance among the sanctified<sup>k</sup>. That you lay up the word of God in your hearts, and teach them diligently to your children, and talk of them when you sit in your houses, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up<sup>l</sup>, that so you and your households may serve the Lord<sup>m</sup>. This is the work that we call you to. And is there any thing that a Christian can make a contro-

<sup>f</sup> John v. 39.

<sup>g</sup> Psal. cxix. 72. Job xxiii. 12.

<sup>h</sup> Psal. i. 2.

<sup>i</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 15.

<sup>k</sup> Acts xx. 32.

<sup>l</sup> Deut. vi. 7. xi. 18, 19.

<sup>m</sup> Josh. xxiv. 15.

versy of in all this? Is there any thing that Protestants are not agreed of?

8. Another part of your work is, that you guard your tongues, and take not the name of God in vain, and speak no reproaches or slanders against your brethren; and that no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouths, but that which is good to the use of edifying, and that it may minister grace unto the hearers<sup>n</sup>, and that fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness be not once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient, but rather giving of thanks<sup>o</sup>. And is there any thing of doubt or controversy in this?

9. Another part of the work which we persuade you to, is to pray continually<sup>p</sup>, and not to wax faint<sup>q</sup>; to be fervent and importunate with God, as those that know the greatness of their necessity<sup>r</sup>. That you pray with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit<sup>s</sup>, and in every thing by prayer and supplication to make known your requests to God<sup>t</sup>. That you pray for kings and all in authority, that we lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty<sup>u</sup>. And is there any thing in all this that any Christian can deny?

10. Lastly, the work we call you to, is, to love your neighbours as yourselves, and to do to others as you would have them (*arbitrio sano*) do to you. To scorn, deride, molest, imprison, slander, or hurt no man, till you would be so used yourselves on the like occasion. To rejoice in other men's profit and reputation as your own. To envy none, to hate no man, to wrong none in their persons, estates, or names. To preserve the chastity, honour, and estate of your neighbour as your own. To love your enemies, and forgive them that wrong you, and pray for them that hate, and hurt, and persecute you. This is your work. And is there any thing of faction, schism, or controversy in this? No: you shall shortly be convinced, that the differences and controversies of believers, and the many opinions about religion, were a

<sup>n</sup> Eph. iv. 29.

<sup>q</sup> Luke xviii. 1.

<sup>r</sup> Phil. iv. 6

<sup>o</sup> Eph. v. 3, 4.

<sup>p</sup> Luke xviii. 6, 7. James v. 15. <sup>s</sup> Eph. vi. 18.

<sup>t</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

<sup>u</sup> 1 Thess. v. 17.



wretched, hypocritical pretence for your neglect and contempt of the substance of religion, about which there was no difference, but all parties were agreed in the confession of the truth, however hypocrites would not live according to their own professions.

But perhaps you will say, that there is such difference in the manner yet among them that agree in the principles and the matter, that you know not which way God is to be worshipped.

I answer, 1. Do you practise as aforesaid, according to the principles and matter agreed on, or not? If you do not, it is but gross hypocrisy to pretend disagreements in the manner, as an excuse for your contempt or omission of the matter, which all agree in. Forsooth, your families shall be prayerless, and you will make a jest of serious prayer, because some pray on a book, and some without, and some that are wisest, think that either way is lawful. Will God be deceived by such silly reasonings as these?

2. But this shall not hide the nakedness of your impiety. Will you also, in the manner of your obedience, but go so far as all Christians are agreed in? I will briefly then give you some particular instances.

1. The work of God must be done with reverence, in his fear; not like the common works of men, with a common, careless frame of mind. God will be "sanctified of all that draw near him<sup>x</sup>." He will be served as God, and not as man. He will not be prayed to with a regardless mind, as those do that can divide their tongues from their hearts, and say over some customary words, while they think of something else. It is a dreadful thing for dust to speak to God Almighty; and a dangerous thing to speak to him as slightly and regardlessly, as if we were talking to one of our companions. It beseemeth a believer to have more of the fear of God upon his heart, in his ordinary converse in the world, than hypocrites and formalists have in their most solemn prayers. Knowest thou the difference between God and man? Put then such a difference between God and man in thy addresses as his Majesty requireth. And see also that thy family compose themselves to a reverent behaviour

<sup>x</sup> Lev. x. 3.

when they join with thee in the worship of God. What have you to say now against this reverent manner of behaviour? Is there any thing controvertible in this?

2. It is also requisite that you be serious and sober in all the service you perform to God. Do it not ludicrously, and with half a heart. Be as much more fervent and serious in seeking God and your salvation, than you are in seeking worldly things, as God and your salvation is better than any thing in the world. Or if that be beyond your reach (though else there is reason for it), at least let the greatest things have the greatest power upon your hearts. You cannot pray more fervently for heaven than heaven deserveth. O let but the excellency and greatness of your work appear in the serious manner of your performance. I hope you cannot say that this is any point of controversy, unless it be a controversy whether a man should be a hypocrite, or be serious in the religion which he doth profess.

3. It is requisite that your service of God be performed understandingly<sup>y</sup>. God delighteth not in the blind devotion of men that know not what they do. Prayers not understood are indeed no prayers; for no man's desire goeth further than his knowledge. And he expresseth not his desires that knoweth not what he expresseth himself. Nor can he expect the concurrence of another man's desires, that speaketh what another understandeth not. The word that is not understood cannot sink into the heart and sanctify it; or if it be not well and soundly understood, it is easily stole away by the tempter<sup>z</sup>. If understanding be necessary in our common conversations, much more in our holy addresses to the Almighty<sup>a</sup>. "A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit; but God hath no pleasure in fools or in their sacrifices<sup>b</sup>;" nor is pleased with a parrot-like lip-service which is not understood. He saith in detestation of the hypocrites, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me<sup>c</sup>." I hope then when we call you to serve God in judgment and with understanding, we call you to nothing that a Christian should make question of.

<sup>y</sup> Psal. xlvii. 7. 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

<sup>z</sup> Matt. xiii. 19. 23.

<sup>a</sup> Prov. xvii. 27.

<sup>b</sup> Eccles. v. 1. 4.

<sup>c</sup> Matt. xv. 8, 9.

4. "God is a Spirit, and they that serve him must serve him in spirit and in truth<sup>d</sup>." "The Father seeketh such to worship him<sup>e</sup>." He calleth for the heart; he looketh for the inward desires of the soul; he converseth with minds that are abstracted from vanity, and are seriously taken up in attending him, and are intent upon the work they do. The carcase of a prayer separated from the life of it, stinketh before the Holy God. As he will be loved, so will he be served, "with all the heart, and soul, and might." And do we call you then to any thing that is doubtful, when we call you to the spiritual worshipping of God?

5. Yet we maintain that the body hath its part in the service of God as well as the soul; and the body must express the inward reverence and devotion of the soul; though not in a way of hypocritical ostentation, yet in a way of serious adoration. The bowing of the knee, the uncovering of the head, and reverent deportment, and whatsoever nature, or common use, and holy institution hath made an expression of holy affections, and a decent and grave behaviour of ourselves, should be carefully observed in the presence of the Most High, and the holy things of God more reverently to be respected than the presence of any mortal man. And the rather, because that a grave, and reverent, and holy manner of deportment in God's worship, reflecteth upon the heart, and helpeth us in our inward and spiritual devotion; and it helpeth the beholders, and awakeneth them to reverent thoughts of God and holy things, which a regardless and common manner of deportment would extinguish. And it is no dishonour to reverent behaviour, that it is the use of hypocrites, but rather an honour to it; for it is something that is good that the hypocrite useth for the cloak of his secret emptiness or evil. If there were nothing good in reverent behaviour before God, it would not serve the hypocrite's turn. As it is a commendation to long prayer, that the Pharisees made it their pretence for the devouring of widows' houses. And those that call them hypocrites, that are much in holy exercises and speeches, should consider that if holy exercises and speeches were not good, they were not fit for the hypocrite's design; evil will not be a fit cloak

<sup>d</sup> John iv. 24.

<sup>e</sup> Ver. 23.



for evil; that which the hypocrite thinks necessary to the covering of his sin, we must think more necessary to the cure of our sin and the saving of our souls. The way to avoid hypocrisy, is not by running into impiety and profaneness; we must do more than the hypocrite, and not less, else he will rise up in judgment against you and condemn you, if he would do more to seem good, than you would do to be good, and to please your Maker: if a Pharisee will pray longer to colour his oppression, than you will to attain salvation. The mischief of hypocrisy is, that the soul of religion is wanting, while the corpse is present. And will you cast away both soul and body, both inside and outside, in opposition to hypocrisy? If others do seem to love God when they do not, will you therefore not so much as seem to do it? So here about reverence in the service of God; the hypocrite should not exceed the sincere in any thing that is truly good. This is the manner of God's service that I persuade you to, and to no other. And is there any thing of controversy in this? Prefer but the spiritual part, and know but what that meaneth, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," that so you may not condemn the innocent, and you shall never say that we will be more backward than you to decency, and reverent behaviour in God's service.

6. God will be served in Purity and Holiness, with cleansed hearts and hands, and not with such as remain defiled with the guilt of any wilful sin. He abhorreth the sacrifice of the wicked and disobedient. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, his prayers are abominable<sup>f</sup>." "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord, (to oppressing, wicked men). When you come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination to me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with: it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting, &c. And when you spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease

<sup>f</sup> Prov. xxviii. 9. xv. 8. xxi. 27. Isa. i. 13. Eccles. v. 1—4.

to do evil ; learn to do well ; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord<sup>g</sup>."

To play the glutton, or drunkard, or filthy fornicator in the day-time, and then to come to God at night, as if it were to make him amends by an hypocritical prayer ; to blaspheme God's name, and oppose his rule, yea, oppose his kingdom and government in yourselves and others, and to do your own will, and hate and scorn them that do his will, and study his will that they may do it, and then to pray that God's name may be hallowed, his kingdom come, and his will be done, is an abusing God, and not serving or pleasing him. Live according to your prayers, and let your lives shew as well as your words what it is that you desire. This is the service of God that we call you to : and can you say that there is any thing controvertible in all this ? Are there any men of any party among Christians, or sober infidels that dare contradict it ?

7. God will be served entirely and universally, in all his commands ; and with all your faculties ; in works of Piety, Justice and Charity, which must never be separated. You must not pretend your charity against your duties of piety ; for God is to be preferred in your estimation, love and service ; and all that is done for man must be done for his sake. You must not set up duties of Piety, against duties of Justice, Charity and Sobriety : it is not true Piety that will not bring forth these. God must be loved above all, and our neighbour as ourselves ; and these two sorts of love are inseparable. Do all the good you can to all while you have opportunity ; especially to them of the household of faith<sup>b</sup>. What good you would hear of in the day of your accounts, that do now, speedily, diligently, and sincerely, according to your power. Say not, ' I may come to want myself,' but "cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days ; give a portion to seven, and also to eight, for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth<sup>i</sup> ;" and whether all may not quickly be taken from thee ; and then thou wilt wish thou hadst done good with it while thou hadst it, and lent it to the Lord, and trusted him with thy remain-

<sup>g</sup> Isa. i, 11—13.

<sup>b</sup> Gal. vi, 10.

<sup>i</sup> Eccles. xi. 1, 2.

der, who entrusted thee with his blessings : and hadst made thee friends of the mammon of unrighteousness that when all fail they might receive thee into the everlasting habitations. Drop not now and then a scant and grudging alms, as if thou wert a loser by it, and God must be beholden to thee ; but believe, that the greatest gain is to thyself, and look after such bargains, and do good as readily, and gladly, and liberally, as one that verily expecteth a full reward in heaven. This is part of the service of God that we exhort you to, even to visit, and relieve, and love Christ in his members and brethren<sup>k</sup>. And is there any thing of doubt or controversy in all this ?

8. Moreover, God will be served with love, and willingness, and delight : it is the most gainful, honourable, and pleasant work in the world, which he hath appointed you, and not a toilsome task or slavery ; and therefore it is not a melancholy, pining, troublesome course of life that we persuade you to, under the name of godliness ; but it is to rejoice in the Lord, and to live in the joyful expectations of eternal life, and in the sense and assurance of the love of God. If you could shew us any probability of a more pleasant and joyful life on earth, than that which serious holiness doth afford, I should be glad with all my heart to hearken to you. I am ready to tell you what is the ground of our comforts, which faith revealeth : if you will come, and soberly debate the case, and shew us the matter and ground of your comforts, which you have or hope for in any other way ; if yours prove greater, and better, and surer than the joys of faith, we will hearken to you, and be of your mind and side.

The matter of the joys of a believer is that all his sins are pardoned ; that God is reconciled to him in Christ ; that he hath the promise of God, that all things, even the greatest sufferings, shall work together for his good ; that he is always in the love, and care, and hands of God ; that he hath leave to draw near him by holy prayer, and open his heart to him in all his straits and wants ; that he may solace himself in his praise and thanksgiving, and in other parts of holy worship ; that he may read and hear his holy word, the

<sup>k</sup> Matt. xxv.



sure discovery of the will of God, and revelation of the things unseen, and the charter of his inheritance ; that he may exercise his soul in the serious believing thoughts of the love of God, revealed in the wonderful work of our redemption, and of the person, and office, and grace of Jesus Christ our Redeemer ; and that he may love that God that hath so wonderfully loved him ; that he hath the Spirit of God to quicken and actuate his soul, to supply his spiritual defects, and kill his sins, and help him to believe, to love, to rejoice, to pray. That this Spirit is God's seal upon him, and the earnest of everlasting life ; that death shall not kill his hopes, nor end his happiness, but that his felicity and fullest joy beginneth, when that of worldlings hath an end, and their endless misery begins ; that he is delivered from everlasting torment by the redemption of Christ, and the sanctification of the Spirit ; that angels will attend his departing soul into the presence of his Father ; that he shall be with his glorified Redeemer and behold his glory ; that his body shall be raised to everlasting life ; that he shall be justified by Christ from all the accusations of the devil, and all the slanders of the malicious world ; that he shall live with God in endless glory, and see and enjoy the glory of his Creator, and shall never more be troubled with enemies, with sin or sorrow, but among his holy ones shall perfectly and most joyfully love and praise the Lord for ever.

These are the matter of a believer's joy : these, purchased by Christ, revealed in his word, sealed by his miracles, his blood, his sacraments, and his Spirit, are our comfort. This is the religion, the labour that we invite you to : it is not to despair, nor to some dry, unprofitable toil, nor to self-troubling, grieving, miserable melancholy, nor to costly sacrifices, or idle ceremonies, or irrational service, such as the heathens offered to their idols ; it is not to cast away all mirth and comfort, and to turn unsociable, and morose, and sour ; but it is to the greatest joys that the world alloweth, and nature is here capable of, and reason can discern and own : it is to begin a truly merry, sociable life : it is to fly from fear and sorrow, in flying from sin and hell, and from the consuming wrath of God : it is to the foretastes of everlasting joys, and to the beginnings of eternal life. This is

the labour, the religion which we would have you follow with all your might.

If you have better things to seek, and follow, and find, let us see them, that we may be as wise as you. If you have not, for your souls' sake, make not choice of vanity, which will deceive you in the day of your necessity.

But you must not think to make us believe that a great house, or a horse, or a whore, or a feast, or a flatterer, or fine clothes, or any childish toys, or brutish filthiness, are more comfortable things than Christ, and everlasting life; or that it is sweeter and better to love a harlot, or lands, or money, than to love God, and Grace, and Glory; nor that any thing that will go no further than the grave with you, is as good as that which will endure to eternity; nor that any pleasure which a dog or swine hath, is equal to the delights of the angels of heaven. If you would have us of your mind, you must not be of this mind, nor persuade us to such horrible things as these. But we profess to you and all the world that we are not so in love with sorrows or sourness, nor so fallen out with joy and pleasure, as to choose a life of miserable sadness, or refuse a life of true delight. If we could hear from any man, or find by the most diligent inquiry, that there is a more full, and sweet, and rational, and satisfactory, and durable delight to be had in any other way than that of serious faith and holiness, which Christ in Scripture hath revealed to us, we are like enough to hearken after it.

But can the distracted, sensual world believe that it is sweeter and happier to ruffle it out in fleshly gallantry and sport, and to rage against the godly for awhile till the vengeance of God lay hold upon them, and give them their reward, than to live in the love of God, and wait in patience for the performance of God's promise of everlasting joy? O what a thing is fleshly passion, and raging sensuality, and blind unbelief! The Lord have mercy upon deluded sinners! The devil's business is to turn the world into a Bedlam, and alas, how strangely hath he prevailed! That so many men can take their greatest misery for their happiness, and the only happiness for an intolerable life! Yea, and be so angry with all that are not of their mind, and will not set

as much by filth and foolery, and as little by God and glory as they! Like the nobleman that was lunatic, or mad by fits, and whenever he was mad, he would swear all were mad that said not as he said, and would make all his servants be sent to Bedlam that would not imitate him, and there they must lie as madmen till their lord was recovered from his madness. So are God's servants used and talked of in the world, as if they were besides themselves, as long as the world is uncured of its madness. As the man is, so is his judgment, and such is his relish, and desire, and delight. When I was a child, I had far more desire to fill my pin-box, than now I have to fill my purse, and accounted it a greater treasure, and had much more delight and contentment in it. And, alas, we may remember since we were strangers to the relish of heavenly things, that we found more pleasure in that of which we are now ashamed, than we did in the most high and excellent things. Let us therefore pity and pray for those that are distempered with the same disease.

I have been longer on this than I thought to have been, because men think that we call them from all mirth, and joy, and pleasure, to a sour, heavy, melancholy life, when we call them to a serious diligence for their salvation. As if levity and folly were the only friends to pleasure, and it were only to be found in childish, worthless, transitory things. And as if the greatest everlasting happiness were no matter of true delight; nor seriousness, nor diligence, a friend to joy.

9. Moreover, as to the manner; God will be served with absolute self-resignation, without exceptions, limitations or reserves: not with the leavings of the flesh, nor with a proviso that you may not suffer by your religion, or be poor, or despised, or abused by the world: but with self-denial you must lay down all the flesh's interest at his feet; and you must take up your cross, and follow a suffering Christ to glory. You must serve him as those that are wholly his, and not your own, and have nothing but what is his, and therefore nothing to be excepted, reserved, or saved from him; but must be content that you and all your interest be in his hands, and saved by him, if saved at all. I know these terms seem hard to flesh and blood, (and should heaven be the crown and reward to them that have undergone



no trial for it?) But here is nothing but what is past all controversy, and all Christians do confess is the word of Christ.

10. Lastly, God will be served resolvedly and constantly: if you will reign, you must conquer and endure to the end. Opposition you must expect; and overcome it, if you would not be overcome. It is not good beginnings that will serve turn, unless you also persevere, and fight out the good fight of faith, and finish your course, and patiently wait out the last breath, for the crown of righteousness, which the righteous Judge will give the conquerors, when the unbelieving world shall say of all their delight and hope, 'It is past and gone, we shall never see or taste it more, but must now taste of that endless wrath of God which we were treasuring up, when we should have worked out our salvation.'

Well sirs, I have all this while been describing to you, both as to the Principles, the Matter and the Manner, what that religion, and service of God is, in which you must labour with all your might; that you may see that it is no factious or private opinions or practices that we call you to do; and that your consciences may no longer be deluded with the pretences of men's different opinions in religion; and that the names of Prelatical, Presbyterian, Puritan, Papist, or any other sounding in your ears, may not so distract or doat you, as to make you forget the name of Christian, which you have all undertaken, nor what the Christian religion is. You see now that it is nothing (no, not a syllable or tittle) which all sober Christians are not agreed in, that we persuade you to do as the work of your religion; and therefore I tell you again here, before that God that shall be your Judge, and that conscience that shall be as a thousand witnesses, that if you will go on in ungodly, worldly lives, and refuse the serious diligence of Christians in this religion which yourselves profess, it shall be so far from being any excuse or ease to you, that there were hypocrites, or heretics, or schismatics, or different opinions in religion in the world, that this very thing shall aggravate your sin and condemnation, that all these hypocrites, schismatics, or different parties in the church, did agree in the confession of all these things, and yet for all that you would not practise

them ; no, nor practise what yourselves confessed : all these parties or sects shall rise up against the sensual and profane, ungodly sinner, and say, ‘ Though we are ignorant or doubtful of many other things, yet we are all agreed in these ; we gave our concurrent testimony of them ; we tempted no man to doubt of these, or to deny them.’ If you will err more than an hypocrite or a schismatic, and be far worse than those that are such, or you account such, and think to excuse it, because they erred in lesser things, it is as if the devil should excuse his sin, by saying, ‘ Lord, thy saints did none of them love thee as they should, and hypocrites did but seem to love thee, and therefore I thought I might hate thee and set against thy ways.’

‘ But (saith the ungodly sensualist) I will never believe that God delighteth in long and earnest prayers ; or that he is moved by the passions or the words of men ; and therefore I take this but for babbling, which you call the serious diligence of believers, in their serving God.’

To this impious objection, I return these several answers.

1. Suppose this were true as you imagine, what is this to you that serve God no way at all with any serious diligence ? that live in sensuality, and wilful disobedience to his laws, and do more for your bodies than for your souls, and for temporal things than for eternal ?

2. Who do you think is most like to understand God’s mind, and what is pleasing to him ? Himself or you ? Is any thing more plainly commanded in God’s word, than praying with frequency, fervency and importunity<sup>k</sup> ? And will you tell God that he hath but dissembled with you, and told you that he is pleased with that which is not pleasing to him ?

3. And what is the reason of your unbelief ? Forsooth, because God is not moved with human words or passions ? I grant he is not. But what of that ? Hath prayer no other use but to move God ? It is enough, 1. That it moveth us, and fitteth us to receive his mercies. 2. And that God hath made it necessary to the effect, and a means or condition without which he will not give the blessing. Do you think (if you judge but by natural reason) that a person is as fit for

<sup>k</sup> Luke xviii. 1—7. 1 Thess. v. 17. James v. 16.

a mercy that knoweth not the want or worth of it, and would not be thankful for it if he had it, as one that valueth it, and is disposed to thankfulness and improvement? And do not you know that holy prayer is nothing but the actuating of holy desires, and the exercise of all those graces which are suited to the due estimation and improvement of the mercy? And is it not the way when we would draw the boat to the bank, to lay hold of the bank and pull, as if we would draw it to the boat? If God be not moved and drawn to us, it is enough that we are moved and drawn to God: and withal that God may give us his own blessings, to whom and upon what terms he please, and that he hath assured us he will give them but to those that value, desire, and seek them, and that with faith, and fervency, and importunity.

And yet I may add, that God is so far above us, as that his incomprehensible essence, and blessed nature is very little known to us; and therefore though we know and confess that he hath no human passions nor imperfections, yet if he assume to himself the title of such a thing as love, desire, joy or wrath, we must in reason believe, that though these are not in God as they are in man with any imperfection; yet there is something in God that cannot more fitly be represented to man, nor be understood by man, than by the images of such expressions as God himself is pleased to use.

3. But I beseech you hearken to nature itself. Doth it not teach all rational creatures in necessity to pray to God? A storm will teach the profanest seaman to pray, and that with continuance and fervency. The mariners could say to Jonah in their danger, "What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God; if so be, that God will think upon us, that we perish not." And they themselves "cried every man unto his God<sup>1</sup>." When thou comest to die, and seest there is no more delay, nor any more hope from the pleasures of sin, or from any of thy old companions or old deceits, then tell me whether nature teach thee not to cry, and cry mightily for pardon, and mercy, and help to God? Then we shall hear thee crying, 'O mercy, mercy, Lord, upon a miserable sinner,' though now thou wilt not believe that prayer doth any good.

<sup>1</sup> Jon. i. 5, 6.



I will say no more to thee of this ; if nature be not conquered, and grace have not forsaken thee, thou wilt be taught at home to answer this objection. Sure thou canst not easily so far conquer reason, as to believe that there is no God, And if thou believe that there is a God, thou canst not believe that he is not to be worshipped, and that with the greatest seriousness and diligence. Nor that he is not the giver of all that thou dost want. Or that the Governor of the world regardeth not the dispositions and actions of his subjects, but will equally reward the good and bad, and give to all alike, and have no respect to men's preparations for his reward. What heathen that believeth that there is a God, doth not believe that prayer to him is a necessary part of his worship ?

*Object.* ' But is not your strict observation of the Lord's day, a controverted thing ?'

*Ans.* In this also I will strip thee of this excuse. 1. Spend the Lord's day but according to the common principles of Christianity and reason, and it shall suffice : spend it but as one that loveth God better than any thing in the world, and that taketh more pleasure in his service than in sin and vanity : spend it but as the necessities of thy own soul, and thy families require ; as one that is glad of so honourable, gainful and delightful an employment, as the public and private worshipping of God, and the serious contemplation of the life to come : as one that knoweth the need and benefit of having stated times for the service of God : and what would come of all religion, if the time were left to each one's will ? Spend it as men that put a just difference between the common business of this world, and things that concern your endless state ; and that have considered the proportion of one day in seven, in reference to this different consequence of the work : spend it as men that have lost as much time as you have done, and have need to make the best of the little that is left ; and that are behindhand so far in the matters of your salvation, and have need to work with all your might, and should be more glad of the helps of such a day, than of thousands of gold and silver : spend it as those that believe that we owe God as much service as the Jews did : spend it as the ancient Christians spent it,

that were wont to stay together almost from morning till night in public worship and communion: spend it as the king's declaration requireth, which saith, ' Our purpose and resolution is, and shall be, to take care that the Lord's day be applied to holy exercises, without unnecessary divertisements.'

2. And if yet there be any doubt in this, I refer you to the judgment of the church of England, expressed in the Homily of the Time and Place of Prayer. And for the time, the name, the antiquity, and authority, and the work itself, I desire you but to receive what is there delivered, not by any factious persons, but by the church. Do this, and we are agreed and satisfied. And I make it my request to the reader, to peruse both parts of that Homily, that he may know how far the church of England is from the loose conceits of the enemies of godliness: and if also you will read over the Homilies against the Peril of Idolatry, you will the more fully know the judgment of the church about the manner of God's worship. (Indeed the whole book is such as the people should be acquainted with.)

I have done my part to open to you the Necessity of **SERIOUS DILIGENCE**, and to call up the sluggish souls of sinners to mind the work of their salvation, and to do it **SPEEDILY**, and with all their **MIGHT**; I must now leave the success to God and you. What use you will make of it, and what you will be and do for the time to come, is a matter that more concerneth yourselves than me. If long speaking, or multitude of words, were the way to prevail with you, I should willingly speak here while my strength would endure, and lengthen out my exhortations yet sevenfold. But that is not the way: a little wearieth you: you love long feasts, and long visits, and plays, and sports, much better than long sermons, or books, or prayers. But it is no small grief to us, to leave you in a case of such importance, without some considerable hopes of your deliverance.

Sirs, the matter is now laid before you, and much in your own hands: it will not be so long! What will you now do? Have I convinced you now, that God and your

salvation are to be sought with all your might? If I have not, it is not for want of evidence in what is said, but for want of willingness in yourselves to know the truth : I have proved to you that it is a matter out of controversy, unless your lusts, and passions, and carnal interest will make a controversy of it. I beseech you tell me if you be of any religion at all, why are you not strict, and serious, and diligent, and mortified, and heavenly in that religion that you are of? Sure, you will not so far shame your own religion, whatever it be, as to say that your religion is not for mortification, holiness, heavenliness, self-denial, or that your religion alloweth you to be ambitious, covetous, gluttonous, drunken; to curse, and swear, and whore, and rail, and oppress the innocent : it is not religion, but diabolical, serpentine malignity that is for any of this.

It is wonderful to think, that learned men, and gentlemen, and men that pretend to reason and ingenuity, can quietly betray their souls to the devil upon such silly grounds, and do the evil that they have no more to say for, and neglect that duty that they have no more to say against, when they know they must do it NOW or NEVER ! That while they confess that there is a God, and a life to come, a heaven and a hell, and that this life is purposely given us for preparation for eternity ; while they confess that God is most wise, and holy, and good, and just, and that sin is the greatest evil, and that the word of God is true, they can yet make shift to quiet themselves in an unholy, sensual, careless life : and that while they honour the apostles and martyrs, and saints that are dead and gone, they hate their successors and imitators, and the lives that they lived, and are inclined to make more martyrs by their malicious cruelty.

Alas, all this comes from the want of a sound belief of the things which they never saw ; and the distance of those things, and the power of passion, and sensual objects and inclinations that hurry them away after present vanities, conquer reason, and rob them of their humanity ; and by the noise of the company of sensual sinners, that harden and deafen one another, and by the just judgment of God forsaking those that would not know him, and leaving them to



the blindness and hardness of their hearts. But is there no remedy ! O Thou, the Fountain of mercy and relief, vouchsafe these sinners a remedy ! O Thou, the Saviour of lost mankind, have mercy upon those sinners in the depth of their security, presumption and misery ! O Thou, the Illuminator and Sanctifier of souls, apply the remedy so dearly purchased ! We are constrained oft to fear lest it be much long of us, that should more seriously preach the awakening truths of God unto men's hearts. And verily our consciences cannot but accuse us, that when we are most lively and serious, alas, we seem but almost to trifle, considering on what a message we come, and of what transcendent things we speak. But satan hath got his advantage upon our hearts, that should be instrumental to kindle theirs, as well as on theirs that should receive the truth. O that we could thirst more after their salvation ! O that we could pray harder for it ; and entreat them more earnestly ; as those that were loath to take a denial from God or man. I must confess to you all with shame and sorrow, that I am even amazed to think of the hardness of my own heart that melteth no more in compassion to the miserable, and is no more earnest and importunate with sinners, when I am upon such a subject as this ; and am telling them that it must be NOW or NEVER ; and when the messenger of death within, and the fame of men's displeasure from without, doth tell me how likely it is that my time shall be but short, and that if I will say any thing that may reach the hearts of sinners, for aught I know, it must be NOW or NEVER. O what an obstinate, what a lamentable disease is this insensibility and hardness of heart ! If I were sure this were the last sermon that ever I should preach, I find now my heart would shew its sluggishness, and rob poor souls of the serious fervour which is suitable to the subject and their case, and needful to the desired success.

But yet, poor sleepy sinners, hear us : though we speak not to you as men would do, that had seen heaven and hell, and were themselves in a perfectly awakened frame, yet hear us while we speak to you the words of truth, with some seriousness and compassionate desire of your salvation. O

look up to your God! Look out unto eternity: look inwardly upon your souls: look wisely upon your short and hasty time: and then bethink you how the little remnant of your time should be employed; and what it is that most concerneth you to dispatch and secure before you die. Now you have sermons, and books, and warnings. It will not be so long. Preachers must have done. God threateneth them, and death threateneth them, and men threaten them, and it is you, it is you that are most severely threatened, and that are called on by God's warnings. "If any man have an ear to hear, let him hear." Now you have abundance of private helps, you have abundance of understanding, gracious companions; you have the Lord's days to spend in holy exercises, for the edification and solace of your souls; you have choice of sound and serious books; and blessed be God, you have the protection of a Christian and a Protestant king and magistracy. O what invaluable mercies are all these! O know your time, and use these with industry; and improve this harvest for your souls! For it will not be thus always. It must be NOW or NEVER.

You have yet time and leave to pray and cry to God in hope. Yet if you have hearts and tongues, he hath an hearing ear. The Spirit of grace is ready to assist you. It will not be thus always. The time is coming when the loudest cries will do no good. O pray, pray, pray, poor, needy, miserable sinners; for it must be NOW or NEVER.

You have yet health and strength, and bodies fit to serve your souls. It will not be so always. Languishing and pains, and death are coming. O use your health and strength for God; for it must be NOW or NEVER.

Yet there are some stirrings of conviction in your consciences. You find that all is not well with you; and you have some thoughts or purposes to repent and be new creatures. There is some hope in this, that yet God hath not quite forsaken you. O trifle not, and stifle not the convictions of your consciences, but hearken to the witness of God within you. It must be NOW or NEVER.

Would you not be loath to be left to the despairing case of many poor distressed souls, that cry out, 'O it is now too late! I fear my day of grace is past; God will not hear me now if I should call upon him; he hath forsaken me, and given me over to myself. It is too late to repent, too late to pray, too late to think of a new life; all is too late.' This case is sad. But yet many of these are in a safer and better case than they imagine, and are but frightened by the tempter, and it is not too late, while they cry out, 'It is too late.' But if you are left to cry in hell, 'It is too late,' alas, how long, and how doleful a cry and lamentation will it be!

O consider, poor sinner, that God knoweth the time and season of thy mercies. He giveth the spring and harvest in their season, and all his mercies in their seasons, and wilt thou not know thy time and season, for love and duty, and thanks to him?

Consider that God who hath commanded thee thy work, hath also appointed thee thy time. And this is his appointed time. To-day, therefore, hearken to his voice, and see that thou harden not thy heart. He that bids thee "repent and work out thy salvation with fear and trembling," doth also bid thee do it *now*. Obey him in the time, if thou wilt be indeed obedient. He best understandeth the fittest time. One would think to men that have lost so much already, and loitered so long, and are so lamentably behindhand, and stand so near the bar of God, and their everlasting state, there should be no need to say any more, to persuade them to be up and doing. I shall add but this: you are never like to have a better time. Take this, or the work will grow more difficult, more doubtful; if through the just judgment of God, it become not desperate. If all this will not serve, but still you will loiter till time be gone, what can your poor friends do but lament your misery! The Lord knows, if we knew what words, what pains, what cost would tend to your awakening, and conversion, and salvation, we should be glad to submit to it; and we hope we should not think our labours, or liberties, or our lives too dear to promote so blessed, and so necessary a work. But if, when all is done, that



we can do, you will leave us nothing but our tears and moans for self-destroyers, the sin is yours, and the suffering shall be yours. If I can do no more, I shall leave this upon record, that we took our time to tell you home, that **SERIOUS DILIGENCE** is necessary to your salvation ; and that “ God is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him <sup>m</sup>,” and that this was your day, your only day. It must be **NOW** or **NEVER**.

<sup>m</sup> Heb. xi. 6.

END OF THE SEVENTH VOLUME.



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